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## MUSSOLINI OVER AFRICA

*By the same author*

AT THE CROSS ROADS OF HISTORY

# MUSSOLINI OVER AFRICA

*by*  
F. A. RIDLEY

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## WHO'S WHO IN THE SECOND ITALIAN-ABYSSINIAN WAR

### DEFENDANT—ABYSSINIA

**A**BYSSINIA (more correctly Ethiopia) is a country of over 400 thousand square miles. Its population, about ten million in number, is of mixed Semitic and Negro blood. The country is economically backward, and the feudal system is still in operation; the country being divided up among a number of powerful nobles (Rasses) owing but loose allegiance to the central government. The Empire is the oldest in Africa: its reigning dynasty claiming descent from the Queen of Sheba and Solomon. Abyssinia professes a form of Coptic Christianity, much diluted with Judaism. The state has existed since classical times, and is probably descended from the Ethiopian Empire of biblical times. Abyssinia has been a member of the League of Nations since 28th September, 1923.

## AGGRESSOR—ITALY

The Italian monarchy ■■ united by the House of Savoy in 1870. Italy's present population is 42,621,000 (census of 1935). It possesses no colonies except its barren African possessions in Tripoli, Libya, Cyrenaica, Eritrea, and Italian Somaliland, all of which are thinly populated and of little economic value on account of their arid nature. ('Very light soil,' as Lord Salisbury remarked once.) Since 30th October, 1922, when the Fascist march on Rome took place, the Government has been in the hands of Signor Benito Mussolini (born 1883), the original founder of Fascism. Italy attempted to conquer Abyssinia in 1895-6, under the Government of Signor Francesco Crispi, but the Italian General, Baratieri, suffered a crushing defeat in the mountains round Adowa, by the Abyssinians under the Emperor Menelik. The Italians lost ten thousand men (1st March, 1896). Italy then recognized the independence of Abyssinia. Italo-Abyssinian relations are, at present, regulated by the treaty of 2nd August, 1928, providing for mutual peace and arbitration for ■ period of twenty years. Notwithstanding which, and their ■■■ membership of the

League of Nations, Mussolini is wantonly preparing to attack Abyssinia in the autumn on the ostensible pretext of suppressing the slave trade.

### *Causes of the War*

The official pretext is the abolition of slavery, but no one takes this seriously.

The actual causes are:

(a) The urgent need of the Italian Government to achieve a spectacular success in foreign policy, in order to counteract its growing unpopularity at home, caused by its oppressive methods and the bad local economic conditions.

(b) The demographic necessity of relieving the pressure of the rapidly growing Italian population (e.g. Between 1926 and 1935 the population of Italy increased from 39,349,000 to 42,621,000.) And nearly all countries which formerly admitted Italian emigrants, now no longer do so (e.g. U.S.A. and Argentine).

(c) Desire to exploit the undeveloped resources of Abyssinia, particularly oil, cotton, and coffee. These are hardly tapped — yet, but are said to be of great value.

(d) Italian desire for a foothold in East Africa, and upon the Indian Ocean for strategic reasons. This is so, particularly in view of the possibilities of future changes in the balance of power and in the colonial world. Mussolini undoubtedly regards the conquest of Abyssinia as merely the jumping-off ground for a great Italian Empire in Africa: the beginning of ■ new 'Roman Empire' ■ the Fascists style it.

(e) The Italians also allege Abyssinian raids into their colonies for purposes of slave taking. A skirmish took place on December 5th, 1934 near the wells at Wal Wal, a hundred miles inside Abyssinian territory. The Abyssinians assert, with apparent justification, that Italian soldiers wantonly attacked the Abyssinian escort of the Anglo-Ethiopian Boundary Commission, which was then surveying the frontier of Abyssinia and British Somaliland.

### *Military resources of combatants*

The Abyssinian army is feudal in organization: each tribe following its local chief (ras or fitaurari) into battle. The chief weapon is the rifle; but the Abyssinians have some modern artillery and a small air force. Exact estimates of their army are not ascertainable, but it does not number less than half ■ million, and may

be ■ much ■ a million strong. Their main strength is in guerilla warfare; and both the country and the climate are inimical to Europeans. The chief advantages of the Italians are tanks and aeroplanes: but these may be largely nullified by the inaccessible nature of much of the country, and by the paucity of Abyssinian towns.

Italy is not generally regarded as a great military power, though the Fascists claim that their reorganization of the Italian war machine has been so thorough as to raise her to this rank. The recent Alpine manœuvres in which 500,000 men took part seem to confirm this claim. The peace strength of the Italian army in 1934-5 was 15,350 officers, and 235,600 of other ranks. There is also a small native force of Askari (i.e. Sepoys). In 1934 her colonial army (not included in the above figures, and partly white colonials), numbered 1,016 officers, and 29,889 men. (The Italian army includes four regiments of mountain artillery and a strong force of Alpine troops trained in mountain fighting, from whom much is expected in Abyssinia.) Italy has (peace strength) six battalions of tanks, and ■ strong air force with personnel of 25,029 persons. Mussolini is himself Minister of War.

*Chief personalities*

1. Ras Tafari (Haile Sellassie 1st) 'King of the Kings of Ethiopia.' (Negus Nagasti, i.e. 'Emperor' of Abyssinia.) Nephew of the national hero, Menelik (b. 1844. Negus 1889-1913. Defeated Italians 1896). Regent 1916-30. Negus from 1930. A progressive ruler, under whom Abyssinia has entered the League of Nations and commenced to abolish slavery.

2. The great Abyssinian Rasses, of whom Ras Kassa of Shoa is said to be the chief. Each of these potentates has his own army, like mediæval feudal barons. The greatest owe little more than a nominal allegiance to the Negus, whom, however, they will support against a foreign invader.

3. Victor Emmanuel III, King of Italy. Said to be opposed to the war; but impotent to prevent it. 'An embarrassed phantom' (Dean Inge in *Evening Standard*, 26th June, 1935). Nominal head of the Italian State, but deprived of all real power by the Fascist dictatorship.

4. Benito Mussolini. Italian Dictator (Prime Minister and head of the Government since the Fascist march on Rome in October 1922). Original founder of Fascism. Known in Italy as 'Il Duce,' i.e. 'The Leader.' Model of all

contemporary Fascist dictators. Regards himself as the heir, and equal, of Julius Cæsar. Fascinated by the idea of a great Eastern Empire. Protagonist of Italian imperialism and chiefly responsible for the coming war. Says 'Italy must expand or explode,' and 'Imperialism is the inevitable law of life.' Ex-Socialist.

5. Of the commanders in the field the following may be noted: General E. Virgin. Military Adviser to the Abyssinian Government. Major-General in the Swedish Army. Former officer in German Army, 1914-8. Commander of Swedish Air Force. Attached to Japanese Army, 1928-30. Refused command of Paraguayan Army in Grand Chaco.

General F. de Bono. Italian Commander-in-Chief. In command in Eritrea. One of the quadrumviri who organized the Fascist March on Rome in October 1922.

General Graziani. Commander-in-Chief in Italian Somaliland. Former Commander in Tripoli. Expert in colonial war.

### *Powers interested*

(a) France. Interested in the Mediterranean and in Somaliland. Holds the nearest port to Abyssinia, Djibuti (French Somaliland).



(b) Japan. Possesses ■ concession of 2,000,000 acres for growing cotton near Lake Tsana. Has already protested officially, but is too far off to interfere.

(c) Great Britain. Interested in East Africa (Kenya, Uganda, and British Somaliland). In the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea route, the vital strategic artery of her Empire. Particularly, in the Blue Nile, whose sources rise in Abyssinia, and whose waters, which the Italians could divert towards their colony of Eritrea, feed both Egypt and the Sudan, in both of which Britain is heavily involved for financial, political, and strategic reasons. (N.B. Britain and France have a particular interest in the war, since Britain could stop it at any time by closing the Suez Canal: and all munitions en route for Abyssinia, must pass through Djibuti.)

(d) Germany, which fears Italian aggression in Austria, and is anxious for a redivision of Africa in her own interests, so as to get back to the colonial world.

(e) Last (but not least), the League of Nations.

A war between Italy and Abyssinia represents the final test of the League in action. By

Article 16 of the Covenant of the League, she is bound, in the event of war between two of the members, to apply 'sanctions' (i.e. economic penalties, etc.) against the aggressor. As here Italy is a peculiarly shameless aggressor, without any qualification or extenuating circumstance, an Italian-Abyssinian war would break the League.

Article 16. ('Sanctions' of the League).  
Clause 1.

Should any member of the League resort to war in disregard of its Covenant under articles 12, 13, or 15 (i.e. those articles relating to arbitration) it shall, *ipso facto*, be deemed to have committed an act of war against all other members of the League, which hereby undertake immediately to subject it to the severance of all trade or financial relations, the prohibition of all intercourse between their nationals and the nationals of the Covenant-breaking State, and the prevention of all financial, commercial or personal intercourse between the nationals of the Covenant-breaking State, and the nationals of any other State, whether a member of the League or not.

2. It shall be the duty of the council in such case to recommend to the several governments

■

concerned what effective military, naval, or air force the members of the League shall severally contribute to the armed forces to be used to protect the Covenants of the League, etc. etc.

## FOREWORD

THE war of 1914 to 1918, the first world war in history, was, it is now clear, merely the necessary and inevitable outcome of the era of imperialism and world colonization, which, from the middle of the eighteenth to the end of the nineteenth century, divided the colonial world among the great powers of Europe. It was the struggle for a redivision of the world, so as to afford the newcomers into the colonial world, in particular Germany, an adequate share of the spoils, at the expense, necessarily of the older and already established powers, in particular, of Great Britain and France, which precipitated that conflict. Notwithstanding the ostensible, and transparently superficial, pretexts which the contending powers advanced as the cause, and justification, of their war-time activities, yet history has refused to be deceived; and the first world war in history is already written down as, *par excellence*, the imperialist war.

Admitting this to be self-evident (and, indeed, it is impossible to doubt it in good faith),

it is obvious that, if world imperialism could, and did, produce a world war in 1914, it both can, and will, if enabled to continue, produce ■ second world war at some future date. For, imperialism is not a mere policy of temporary aggrandizement, to be charmed away by words, and exorcised by protocols; it is precisely the contrary, ■ new world policy: it constitutes ■ new era. For the first time in recorded history, it makes the subjugation and effective exploitation of the whole world the conscious ambition of its promoters. To the active imperialist, the whole planet, and nothing less, is the prize to be won, and the oyster to be opened. To conquer the world was the problem of the nineteenth-century empires; a problem which they largely solved by means of successive colonial wars which succeeded each other, with but the barest interruption, throughout the whole of the second half of the nineteenth century; the age of aggrandizement on a world scale.

The conquest of the world was, thus, the problem of nineteenth-century imperialism; a problem which the technical superiority provided by firearms enabled it to achieve with comparative ease, and with but occasional setbacks. That epoch of sustained, unrestrained

conquest was the golden age of European imperialism; but it is ■■■ a vanished age, a bygone era. To the simple, now succeeds the complex; to the problem, relatively simple, of conquering primitive, technically undeveloped peoples, there succeeds the infinitely more complex and arduous task of dividing the spoils, which feat the imperialist nations can only accomplish by conflict with each other; the aboriginals having been dispossessed or rendered impotent.

And imperialism is guided solely by self-interest, and not at all—despite its frequent hypocrisy—by justice or reason: since, in final analysis and at the ultimate bar of history, the morals of imperialism are the morals of a wolf pack, and imperialist ■■■ is the final culmination of 'man, the wolf of man' ('*homo homini lupus*'). No imperialist division, or redivision, of the world, can be achieved except by naked violence. For this reason, it is as certain as anything can well be, that, just as the nineteenth century was the era of the conquest of the world, and, therefore, the era of unceasing colonial wars, so the twentieth century will be, if imperialism continues its present sway, the era of unceasing wars *between the imperialists*, the era of the division and redivision, of the

world; in both cases one necessarily violent. If imperialism continues, the twentieth century will, and must, become the era of world wars. Nothing else is conceivably possible granting that this political and economic creed remains in the saddle.

If, therefore, one asks the question as to what fundamental characteristic separates the nineteenth century from its successor, the twentieth, the answer can only be, that, in the former era, the white races conquered the coloured world, whereas in the twentieth, they must fight each other in order to divide it. (And the wars of technically equipped nations against each other will, of course, be a very different proposition to that sickening serial story of the massacre of primitive tropical races by modern military science, which constituted the era of colonial war in the nineteenth century.) In any case, since the primary characteristic of the imperialist system is that it is the first really world-system of world politics, every imperialist war may—or must—end in ■ world war. And this fact alone is quite sufficient to constitute the imperialism of the twentieth century ■ something generically different from that of the nineteenth; and to ensure that the world history of the twentieth

century will be very different from, and—it is much to be feared—very much more terrible than was, the history of its predecessor, the nineteenth century.

The epoch of the conflict of imperialist with imperialist cannot, however, dawn until the world has been completely conquered by imperialism and though this historical phase is approaching, it has not yet been completely attained. Only when there are no 'backward' (i.e. technically primitive) races left to conquer, will imperialism find itself in the fabled rôle of Alexander, weeping because it has no more worlds left to conquer. (And whereas the Macedonian had, in reality, enough left to have occupied him for a generation had he managed to survive the marsh fever of Babylonia which was responsible for his untimely 'taking off,' modern imperialism, in like case to that depicted in the legend, must either fight itself to a standstill, or, adopting Jules Verne and H. G. Wells as its prophets in lieu of Cecil Rhodes and Baron Tanaka, must seek tracks to the solar planets, where alone, in such a not distant eventuality, it can find new worlds to conquer and new markets to exploit!)

The colonial conquests of modern imperialism have been achieved in five great areas of



the world: Asia, Africa, America, Indonesia, and Polynesia. Of these areas, one, America, has already raised the notice to foreign trespassers which the 'Monroe doctrine' represents. Two more, Indonesia and Polynesia, are now monopolies of, respectively, Dutch and Anglo-Saxon imperialism. But, whereas the chief drive of imperialism has been in Asia and Africa, there are still extensive regions, as yet unoccupied, in these continents: in Asia, China, plus some weak buffer states in central and eastern Asia; i.e. Persia, Afghanistan, Siam; in Africa the ancient empire of Abyssinia or (more correctly) Ethiopia, the last unconquered African Empire which survives, a relic of earlier ages, into the age of imperialism.

When these areas have been annexed by imperialism, then the subjugation of the world is completed; and the epoch of world conquest, then concluded, will be followed necessarily by the epoch of world division, and, therefore of world wars. Observed from this ultimate perspective, the aboriginals of China and Abyssinia represent the last barrier to the era of inter-imperialist conflict: and their elimination means ultimately the elimination of the last life insurance of mankind; since, once absorbed, the limits of imperialism will become the

boundaries of the world; and then, indeed, the era of world conflicts must, and will, begin.

At the time these lines are written (August 1935) it is clear that this era is approaching. To-day, imperialism is recovering from its wounds received in the world war, and is, once again, preparing to move forward to a new division of the world, which, sooner or later, implies a new world war. But, before resorting to this desperate expedient, which may, indeed, prove fatal to imperialism itself, the empires in need of expansion seek to obtain easier prey than that provided by rival empires, similarly armed to the teeth. Consequently they are now preparing to consummate the epoch of colonial conquest by subjugating the last remaining aboriginal nations which to-day preserve the institutions of an earlier age, and which are, consequently, ill-prepared to face the modern era of technical war. Hence, it is highly probable that the next decade will witness the end of such earlier states as have managed to survive from the more primitive epochs of history.

Of this class of states, two, in particular, stand out: China, the most ancient of Asiatic Empires, and Abyssinia, the most ancient of African Empires. Of these two ancient states,

China is vast, Abyssinia considerable, in extent ; and both possess, or ■■■ reputed to possess, great and untapped resources suitable for exploitation by modern industrialism. Moreover, neither is equipped for war on the European scale: ■ fact which is of primary importance in the world of imperialism, the world of the reign of naked force, of the ethics of the man-eater and the wolf pack. With the conquest of these ancient states, the era of colonial conquest will, virtually, end.

This latest phase of colonial conquest was inaugurated in September 1931 by Japan, that Asiatic cuckoo in European plumes, when she invaded Manchuria: a feat which, it is now evident, was deliberately embarked upon ■ the prelude to the conquest of China, step by step, in conscious imitation of the British conquest of India, 'devouring the artichoke leaf by leaf' (as an Italian politician once summed up the policy of the House of Savoy in Italy) with all 'the inevitability of gradualness.' Already, Japan indicates that the rest of the world can keep its hands off China, her destined prey.

And the final conquest of Africa approaches also, similarly with that of Asia. Italian imperialism, under the ruthless direction of Mussolini, likewise prepares to expand, driven

on by similarly urgent economic and demographic internal necessities. To-day, Italian imperialism, foiled at Adowa in 1896 in its attempt to conquer Ethiopia, prepares for a second attempt with vastly greater resources. Should Mussolini succeed where Crispi failed in 1896, then 'the opening up of Africa' will be concluded; her last empire will be conquered; the continent immemorially 'dark' will, at long last, be completely bathed in a sea of albuminous light!

These two projected conquests, that of China by Japanese, and of Ethiopia by Italian, imperialism, will, then, together close an historic epoch, that of the conquest of the colonial world by the imperialism of the great powers. Of these two conquests, that of China is, unquestionably, the greater undertaking, and will, if achieved, possess the more permanent and far-reaching importance to the world of the twentieth century. None the less, it will be long, complicated, and will be hardly consummated without the intervention of other great imperialist powers. In particular, the interest of Soviet Russia in Chinese Communism, and the vast interests of the British Empire and America in the policy of the economic 'open door' in China, and in the Pacific generally,

make it most unlikely that Japan will conquer China without being involved in a war against one, or more, of these Great Powers. (If extraordinary good fortune enables Japan to achieve her pan-Asiatic policy and to become the master of eastern Asia, then, indeed, the Yellow Peril might become a reality, and the era of Jenghis Khan return; but this hardly seems likely.)

Consequently, in the following pages we investigate the other, African, enterprise of contemporary imperialism, the projected Italian conquest of Ethiopia, which, whether attempted this year, or postponed until a later date, now appears to be, sooner or later, inevitable. And, accordingly, we proceed to study this contemporary episode of imperialist conquest, not as an end in itself, which it is not, either objectively, or in the minds of its directors, but as a highly instructive episode in the present evolution of imperialism, and of the twentieth century, the era, willy-nilly, of world imperialism. In Abyssinia, unlike China, it is improbable that vested interests among the great powers are strong enough to induce them to earn the undying hatred of Italy by threatening hostile intervention against the first major venture of Fascist imperialism

and of its ruthless chief. Hence, Mussolini, unlike his Japanese prototypes, may expect a clear run.

Accordingly the second Italian invasion of East Africa constitutes an episode of a clear-cut character; one highly illuminating as to the future of imperialism and of the twentieth century under its influence. As such, and, in particular, in regard to its world implications and its rôle in the modern development of imperialism, we proceed to study it.



**PART ONE**  
**UNCONQUERED ETHIOPIA**





## CHAPTER I

### ETHIOPIA\* AND HER INVADERS

THE last African Empire to preserve its independence is, also, the most ancient of African Empires. Whereas the chief negro states of South and West Africa, such as Zululand and Dahomey, were of recent origin, the ancient Empire of Abyssinia (as Europeans call it), or Ethiopia (as the natives themselves describe it) is of vast antiquity, tracing its corporate existence ■ ■ state back to, at least, the fourth century of our era, when Christianity was introduced from Roman Egypt by Frumentius, an emissary of the redoubtable St. Athanasius himself. Moreover, the modern empire can trace back its historic affiliations with ■ fair degree of probability, if not to Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, its traditional founders, at any rate to that ancient

\*Throughout the subsequent pages the names 'Ethiopia' and 'Abyssinia' are used impartially of the Empire of the Negus. Ethiopia is, of course, the correct native title. The term Abyssinian, meaning originally the 'mixed race,' being originally ■ Moham-medan term of abuse, like the similar term, 'Kaffir,' i.e., 'infidel.'

Ethiopian Empire which, in the eighth century B.C., conquered Egypt, and subsequently contested the empire of the world with Assyria (cf. the biblical books of 'Kings' and 'Chronicles').

There is, thus, no European state of to-day with anything like such ■ lengthy ancestry. There is good reason to believe that the Abyssinians of to-day are the descendants of those ancient Ethiopians, whom Perseus, in his quest for the Gorgon's head, found living on terms of closest friendship with the gods themselves. It is, thus, no upstart empire, but a very ancient chapter of human history that contemporary imperialism proposes to terminate. (cf. Strabo, 'The Ethiopians, among whom the gods love to dwell.')

Though it received its religion from the Roman Empire, Ethiopia always remained outside its political orbit. But, in the sixth century, it came within ■ ace of changing the course of history by crushing, so to speak, in its cradle, the nascent Empire of Islam and the religion of Mohammed. In A.D. 570, the year of the birth of the Arabian Prophet, an Abyssinian army crossed the Red Sea and assailed Mecca, the birthplace of the Prophet and the destined centre of his religion. The attack

was repulsed, but the terror which it instilled survives to-day in the Koran, where several *suras* (verses) commemorate the year of the 'Elephant,' so named from a solitary elephant which headed the attacking army.

Later, by a curious coincidence, Ethiopia assisted in founding the religion of Islam, which was later to be its implacable enemy: the early disciples of Mohammed taking refuge there during the stormy period which preceded Mohammed's Flight (Hegira) to Medina, and his subsequent rise to power (A.D. 622).

The subsequent rise of Islam and its astonishing expansion cut off the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia from the rest of Christendom, and, thus, isolated it from civilization: ■ fact which, without doubt, has been of fundamental importance for Abyssinian history. In fact, the history of Abyssinia throughout the Middle Ages was one long war of defence against the encircling power of Islam, entrenched upon every side.

Until the sixteenth century, when the formidable military power of Turkey made its appearance on the Red Sea littoral, the great defensive strength of Ethiopia, combined with the warlike character of her people enabled them to repulse all attacks. A partial exception

was constituted from the tenth—thirteenth century, when the Falasha, ■ tribe of Black Jews—still existent in Ethiopia\* under the leadership of an Amazonian queen, by name, Judith, overthrew the hereditary dynasty, and subjugated the country in their own interest, and that of Judaism. The 'occupation' has left ■ permanent mark on Ethiopian history. It explains the subsequent combination of the observance of the Jewish (Mosaic) law with Abyssinian Christianity, which forms so unique a feature of the Ethiopian Church, and it h■ left its mark on the Ethiopian Monarchy, which, from that time on, added to the titles of the Negus, that of 'Conquering Lion of Judah.'†

A.D. 1268 the patron saint of the Ethiopian Church, Tekla Aimanot (i.e. Root of Faith), brought about the restoration of the old Solomonic line which claimed descent from Menelik, the legendary founder of the Ethiopian

\* cf. Herman Norden, *Africa's Last Empire*, pp. 185 et seq.

† The current title of 'Emperor of Abyssinia' has no validity, and merely arises from the rather inane custom of calling every remote large-scale potentate ■ 'Emperor.' Actually the correct title of the ruler of the Abyssinian Empire is the 'Negus Nagasti,' or 'King of Kings,' ■ title exactly descriptive of the feudal character of Abyssinia, being analagous to the Persian 'Shah-in-Shah,' i.e., King of Kings. Or to the old Anglo-Saxon 'Bretwalda,' or overlord in feudal Anglo-Saxon times.

Monarchy, the son of Solomon and Balkis, Queen of Sheba. This dynasty continued to occupy the throne until their deposition by Theodore in the year 1855.\* When the Portuguese arrived in the mid-sixteenth century they found Abyssinia far more united than it has ever been since: the Negus having what his successor to-day would be only too glad to have, an effective control over the whole country and the great nobles. The anarchic feudal conditions which have characterized the social, political, and military history of Abyssinia for the past three centuries, and still characterize it to-day, are the legacy of two sets of foreigners who arrived in East Africa, respectively, by land and sea, in the early sixteenth century. Their combined influence led to the isolation, political disunity, and cultural backwardness of Ethiopia, which has ruined its ancient civilization and reduced the modern empire to the conditions of a dark age, from which it has only just begun to emerge in the course of the present century. These two alien influences were represented, respectively, by the Mohammedans and the Portuguese.

The Mohammedans were first in the field.

\* The present imperial dynasty is descended on the female side from the ancient dynasty of Solomon.

Round about the year 1530, Mohammed Gran (i.e. 'the left handed'), a Somali soldier of fortune, made himself Sultan of Harrar, and reinforced by the powerful Turkish Empire, which had conquered Egypt in 1517 and had just reached the Red Sea, invaded Abyssinia and overran the whole country. His Turkish imported firearms proved irresistible, and he inflicted repeated defeats on the Negus, who eventually perished of privation in a remote part of the country: but for the timely arrival of the Portuguese it seems probable that the Abyssinians would have lost both their nationality and their religion.

From this proximate fate, they were saved by the arrival of the Portuguese, lured on by the stories, long current in mediæval Europe, of the Christian kingdom of the priest-king ('Prester') John, whose kingdom was situated in the wilds of Africa. At that time, of course, Portugal was at the height of her power and in the midst of that brief but brilliant expansion which made her the wonder of sixteenth-century Europe. By the celebrated Bull of Alexander VI (Rodrigo Borgia) Portugal divided the whole non-European colonial world with Spain: her share including the whole Eastern hemisphere! Abyssinia, therefore, had

been assigned by the Papal jurisdiction to Portugal: and the Portuguese, in whom religious and commercial interests were curiously intermixed, welcomed the opportunity at once to conquer ■ vast empire, and, at the same time, to rescue a distressed Christian nation from their hereditary enemies, the Mohammedans—who, from the eighth to the twelfth century had ruled over Portugal also—and then to restore the heretical church of Ethiopia to the communion of the Roman Catholic Church, of which the Portuguese were such fanatical champions. The imperialism of the sixteenth century was a curious mixture of economic greed and of crusading enthusiasm, and the missionary was then, even more than in subsequent centuries, 'the vanguard of empire': both the Japanese and the Abyssinians discovered this in the case of sixteenth-century Portugal.

Before, however, Portugal could acquire either political or religious control of the Ethiopian empire, it was first necessary to expel the Mohammedan Sultan, Mohammed Gran, who, with a mixed army of Turkish musketeers and Somali horsemen and spearsmen, had made himself master of almost the whole country, and had reduced the power of the Negus to a



mere shadow. This task of primary deliverance was accomplished by a small force of Portuguese soldiers, some four hundred and fifty strong, who performed prodigies of valour worthy of their contemporary, Don Quixote, or of the heroes, whose astounding exploits were depicted by their countryman and contemporary, Camoens, in his great epic of Portuguese history, 'The Lusiad.' Under the leadership of Christopher da Gama, son of the great navigator, Vasco da Gama, the discoverer of the sea route to India, they rescued Abyssinia from her invaders; and, after a series of desperate battles (in one of which da Gama himself perished) they finally defeated and killed Gran, and expelled the Mohammedans from the country (21st February, 1543).\*

The expected Portuguese annexation of Abyssinia did not, however, eventuate. The original Portuguese were too weakened by their desperate adventure to undertake the feat themselves, and the declining power of Portugal, then approaching the end of her amazing century of expansion (c. 1450-1550) did not permit her to expend more energy in

\* The history of the relations of Portugal and Abyssinia in the sixteenth century has been fully described by C. F. Rey in his *Romance of the Portuguese in Abyssinia*.

that direction. While, therefore, Portuguese intercourse with Abyssinia continued until well into the seventeenth century, their interference with the internal affairs of the country took the form chiefly of repeated efforts, conducted mainly by the agency of Jesuit missionaries, to convert the heretical Abyssinian Church to the tenets of the Roman Catholic Church: a course which was effectual in uniting the whole nation against the foreigners in a fanatical defence of their hereditary religion, which had been the unifying principle of the national life for so many centuries, in face of the encircling world of Islam.

Eventually, the Portuguese, along with all other foreigners, were expelled from the empire of the Negus in the early seventeenth century, in a similar manner, and at precisely the same time, ■ they were expelled from Japan, whose edict of seclusion dates from 1637.

Note. (The Ethiopian Church derives from the Coptic Church of Egypt, and it shares the doctrinal heresies, known technically ■ 'Jacobitism,' which separate the Coptic Church from the orthodox churches of the East and West alike. In addition, the Ethiopian Church has certain local peculiarities, particularly in its observance of the Mosaic Law and other

Jewish customs. By ■ ancient usage of the Church, the Abuna, or Primate, of Abyssinia is always an Egyptian monk sent from Cairo by the Patriarch of Alexandria. The Church possesses great wealth and influence; but is regarded with but little favour by the rest of the Christian world. A well-known Roman Catholic theologian, Dr. Adrian Fortescue, probably expresses the general opinion, when he writes that the Church of Ethiopia is 'now considerably the most backward part of the whole Christian family.'\*

From the early seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century, Abyssinia, like Japan, remained a hermit land, whose condition was accurately and tersely summarized by the great historian, Gibbon, when he wrote that 'the gates of that solitary realm were for ever shut against the arts, the science, and the fanaticism of Europe.'† As was inevitable under such conditions of isolation, the empire degenerated, both politically and culturally. Prior to the Turkish—Somali invasion of the early sixteenth century, the Christian Empire had been politically united and at least semi-civilized:

\* cf. Rev. Dr. A. Fortescue, *The Lesser Eastern Churches*, p. 297.

† cf. E. Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. V, p. 168, edition edited by Prof. J. B. Bury.

but when the next European visited the forbidden land towards the end of the eighteenth century, the customs he describes are those of a barbaric community.

This was the celebrated James Bruce, the famous explorer, who, between 1768 and 1773, discovered the source of the Blue Nile, and travelled through Abyssinia en route. By this time, Abyssinia was only known to Europeans as a land of mystery. (And, as such, formed the appropriately mysterious background to the adventures of 'Rasselas, the Prince of Abyssinia,' the once celebrated romance of Dr. Samuel Johnson, the friend of Bruce, published in 1759.)

Bruce describes a country barely distinguishable from the frankly barbaric states of Negro Africa. By this time Abyssinia had become the prey of feudal anarchy; and the Negus, the nominal 'Emperor,' was completely overshadowed by the power of the provincial rasses, the great feudal lords. The habits of the people, as described by Bruce, were of the most primitive character: e.g., Bruce describes ■ banquet, at which he was present, in which the meat was supplied by an ox who was carved up *alive*, in a ■■■■ which horrified even that stolid Scot, and which would cer-

tainly have made any normally squeamish person physically sick upon the spot.\*

Down to the mid-nineteenth century the social and political characteristics of the Abyssian Empire represented ■ similar cultural stage to that which dominated European society throughout the Dark Ages that followed the fall of the Roman Empire in Western Europe (c. A.D. 500-1000).

The modern, as distinct from the mediæval history of Abyssinia, began in 1855, when a remarkable soldier of fortune, Kassa by name, had himself crowned ■ Negus Nagasti, after deposing the immemorially ancient imperial dynasty, and assumed the title of Theodore. Under his rule, the country was thrown open to foreigners, and a beginning was made of ending the feudal disunity of the empire. These innovations, however, coupled with the extreme severity of the methods of repression used by the usurper, alienated the great nobles, so that, by the time of the British expedition in 1867, the Negus had lost all authority outside his own capital, and could only command the allegiance of his own personal retainers, whose assistance he could alone rely on to check the British advance.

■ cf. James Bruce, *Travels in Abyssinia*.

The British intervention was the first armed invasion of Abyssina by Europeans since the Portuguese: its cause ■■■ the imprisonment of the British consul, Cameron, and other Europeans, by Theodore: its sole object was to release them; which aim, accomplished by the suicide of Theodore which followed his defeat and the capture of his mountain stronghold, Magdala, was followed by the instantaneous evacuation of the country. Thus, the British invasion of Sir Robert Napier and his army, was in no respect an attempt to add the ancient state of Ethiopia to the British Empire.

Moreover, it in no way accurately reflected the military weakness of Abyssinia: a fact which Egyptians and Italians were to learn later, to their cost. The easy success of the British expedition, about fourteen thousand strong, did not demonstrate that Abyssinia could be deprived of her independence by the first comer. It was merely a personal war against an unpopular despot, whom the great majority of the Abyssinian nobles had already repudiated, and whose authority over the nation had already effectually ceased to function. Against the invading British, Theodore could only muster his ■■■ personal retainers, a few thousands in all, and a single brief and

one-sided engagement outside the walls of Magdala was sufficient to terminate the campaign and to achieve its definite object, the rescue of the British captives.

In no respect ■■■ the tremendous latent power of resistance possessed by the Ethiopian nation called into play: in no respect could the war of Theodore against the British be called a national war. Had the later Egyptian and Italian invaders of the Ethiopian empire understood this, they would not have so lightly embarked upon their perilous and disastrous adventures. Theodore, in last analysis, was defeated, not by the British, but by the defection of the Abyssinian tribes, and of their leaders, the great feudal Rassas.

This fact was vividly illustrated in the succeeding generation, when three formidable waves of invasion broke upon the lonely empire. The second half of the nineteenth century was, as remarked above, the Golden Age of colonial imperialism: the epoch of 'the opening up of Africa'—and of other backward regions of the earth as well. Between 1850, when eighty per cent of Africa was terra incognita to European geography, and the end of the century, when the Dark Continent had become ■ congeries of European colonies, a

vast process of absorption and annexation, of 'shouldering the white man's burden'—to borrow the jargon of imperialism—had been effected; and innumerable African states and tribes, both large and small, had vanished from the political map, during, and ■ a result of, the process. It was, therefore, in the nature of things that the largest and most ancient of African Empires should not remain immune from attack. But for its great defensive strength, which represented the combination of ■ singularly difficult country and a nation of hardy warriors, Ethiopia would, undoubtedly, have gone to join the Zulus, Ashantis, Dahomeyans, Baganda, and innumerable other native states, who went to swell the colonial empires of the great European powers throughout this same epoch.

In 1875, and again in 1876, Egypt—at that time an independent state engaged upon an imperialist policy of its own in the Soudan—invaded Abyssinia: but, meeting, unlike the British, the united resistance of the entire Abyssinian Empire, the Egyptians were heavily defeated on both occasions. As a result of this, we learn from Mr. Winston Churchill, in his book *The River War*, that, henceforth, the military reputation of Abyssinia far surpassed



that of Egypt throughout East Africa and the Soudan.

The next assault upon the integrity of the Empire of the Negus came from an entirely different quarter and was directly reminiscent of the invasion of Gran in the sixteenth century. The oppression and extortions of the Egyptian regime in the Soudan provoked ■ national revolution, under the guise of a religious reformation, a common phenomenon among primitive peoples. This movement was begun and led to victory by that remarkable man who is known to Europeans ■ the Mahdi, or Prophet—Successor of Mohammed—one of the most remarkable men in African history, ■ belated Mohammed, who, in an age before firearms broke the hitherto irresistible military impetus of religious fanaticism, would undoubtedly have founded ■ great empire in North Africa.

As it was, the Dervish Empire (1883–98) made ■ determined effort to achieve the task, and, in the course of this attempt, made a determined effort to conquer the great Christian Empire of Africa. Hence, after some inconclusive encounters, a great battle at Gallabat (10th March, 1889) decided the issue. After a terrible conflict (vividly described by Mr.

Winston Churchill in *The River War*) victory was inclining towards the Abyssinians, when the Negus, John, was killed by a bullet; whereupon the Abyssinians retreated. Strategically, however, the battle of Gallabat was ■ victory for Abyssinia, even if, tactically, ■ reverse. Though the dervishes carried the head of the Negus to Omdurman, they abandoned all future attempts to subjugate Abyssinia.

The fallen Negus had himself been ■ usurper, who had acquired supremacy after the withdrawal of the British, whom he had assisted in their march on Magdala. His dynasty proved unable to hold its own against Menelik, the King of Shoa, who, soon after the battle of Gallabat, became Negus, and inaugurated the present dynasty. Menelik, the Louis XIV of Ethiopia, was undoubtedly the greatest figure in Abyssinian, if not of all African, history, at any rate since the time of Solomon! Like his fabled ancestor, wisdom, in his case political wisdom, was his outstanding characteristic. He was great ■ a statesman rather than as a soldier. As his reign is inseparably linked up with the first attempt of Italian imperialism to conquer Abyssinia, it is treated in that connection in the ensuing chapter.

## CHAPTER II

### CRISPI AND ADOWA

#### ITALIAN IMPERIALISM MAKES ITS FIRST ATTEMPT

THE development of modern imperialism has proceeded in accordance with changes in the geographical *milieu*. Whereas the imperialism of antiquity, and that (if one can dignify it with that title) of the Middle Ages, was ■ Mediterranean imperialism which centred around the great inland sea of antiquity, that of modern times has centred, in the first place, around the Atlantic Ocean, the great ocean of modern times. In succession to the long line of Mediterranean Empires which exercised imperial dominion in accordance with the circumstances of their era, from ancient Egypt to mediæval Venice, modern history reveals a succession of Atlantic Empires, beginning with Spain and Portugal in the sixteenth century, and coming down to England, France and Germany in the nineteenth. It was only at ■ relatively late date in modern times, not, in

fact, until the closing decades of the nineteenth century, that the policy of colonial imperialism, of political and economic expansion, was adopted as ■ conscious ambition by a great Mediterranean power.

That power was Italy, the last in the field of the great European Powers to adopt the policy of colonial aggrandizement. When the long disunity which had rendered Italy ■ political cypher ever since the fall of the Roman Empire, finally ended in 1870, when the capture of Papal Rome united the whole Italian Peninsula under the House of Savoy; then, the way was open for further expansion. It is, indeed, one of the paradoxes of modern society that successful nationalism generally becomes imperialism; and modern history is, accordingly, full of paradoxical illustrations of nations, who, for generations have struggled heroically for their own freedom, then going on to achieve 'a place in the sun,' by depriving other nations of the liberties for which they have themselves fought and suffered for so long. Both the Poland of Pilsudski and the Italy of Crispi and Mussolini illustrate this modern phenomenon.

When, in the 'eighties of the nineteenth century, Italy began to look across the sea in her quest for economic and territorial aggrand-

izement, she found herself cramped in and lacking room to expand. Whereas in the mid-nineteenth century, a generation earlier, the bulk of Africa was still unoccupied, and even largely unexplored; from 1837, when occurred the great Boer trek from Cape Colony into the interior, right up to the nineteenth century's end, Africa was opened up, conquered, and 'civilized' with positively indecent haste: indeed, when the scientific study of world history eventually succeeds and supersedes the partisan study of provincial nationalisms, then the European occupation of Africa will loom ■ great deal larger in its purview than the petty domestic squabbles and personalities which have, hitherto, loomed so large in historical records.

In the case of Italy insult was, so to speak, added to injury by the occupation, right under the nose, actually, of nascent Italian imperialism, of North Africa, whose geographical situation opposite Sicily makes it the natural starting point for an Italian Empire. Italian expansion in North Africa was nipped in the bud by the French occupation of Tunis in 1881, and by the British occupation of Egypt in 1882: events which robbed Italy of her 'natural' field for expansion. As a colonial

war against these great powers was, of course, out of the question, the only thing left was to look round for other openings.

The only openings that the Italians could find proved eventually to be upon the barren littoral of the Red Sea. Here, by 1890, they had acquired a long thin strip of territory of no great value economically, lying between the arid shores of the Red Sea and the mountains of Abyssinia: to this colony, the name of Eritrea\* was attached by a royal decree of 1st January, 1890. Later, Italy also acquired northern Somaliland, to the South-East of Abyssinia, facing the Indian Ocean, and including Cape Guardafui, the easternmost point of the African continent. Both these colonial acquisitions were, however, barren and poverty-stricken: neither was self supporting with regard even to its administrative expenses. In fact, these foundation stones of the projected Italian Empire were very emphatically the reverse of blue ribands: they were, in fact, merely stepping stones to higher things; spurs to goad Italian ambition forward, particularly when it contrasted its own meagre colonial possessions with the vast and fertile

\* The name 'Eritrea' is of classical origin, derived from the *Mare Erythraeum* of the Romans. *Erythras* (Greek) means 'red.'

empires that such earlier imperial birds as Holland, Great Britain, and France, had succeeded in acquiring.

An embryo imperialism in this invidious position could not be expected to remain stationary: nor was there any need that it should. For, next door, was the unconquered Empire of Ethiopia, over four hundred thousand square miles in extent, i.e. larger by far than Italy itself, and still apparently in that technically primitive state which always acts as a magnet to draw imperialist invasion. Moreover, beyond aboriginal Ethiopia lay Dervish Soudan—as yet unoccupied by the British. (Lord Kitchener did not reach Omdurman until 1898.) The way seemed open for the creation of a great Italian Empire stretching far into the depths of Central Africa. And the Abyssinian Empire, torn by civil war and weakened by the bloody war against the Soudanese dervishes, which had ended in the death of the Negus John at Gallabat (10th March, 1889), had apparently paved the way for Italian aggression by weakening the defensive power of Ethiopia.

In any case, this was, still, the nineteenth century, when it was taken as an elementary axiom of Euclid that European military science

could always dispose of any number of coloured warriors; and when the defeat of a white army on a colonial battlefield was regarded as a breach of an elementary law of nature! So the Italian generals and politicians reasoned, conformable to the ideas of nineteenth-century imperialism: they were, furthermore, undoubtedly led astray by the easy success of the English invasion of 1867-8; ignoring the fact that Theodore, the object of that invasion, was just as much hated by the great Rasscs and the nation as by the British themselves.

The first steps of the Italian invasion, however, went off quite smoothly. The new Negus, Menelik, was a master politician, anxious, above all, to gain time. He, therefore, immediately concluded with Italy the Treaty of Ucciali (1889) which the Italians, at least, understood as giving them the rights of a protectorate over the Negus. Menelik himself utilized the time given him by the Treaty to assert his undisputed sway over the feudal princes, the Rasscs, to conquer the semi-savage Galla tribes, who, since the sixteenth century, have inhabited the south and east of the country, and, last, but by no means least, to reorganize his army on lines more up to date than those customary among a backward feudal



nation organized ■ mediæval lines. In this latter task Menelik received invaluable assistance from French imperialism, already settled in northern Somaliland, and traditionally jealous of Italian expansion in North Africa, ever since the French occupation of Tunis had brought the two countries to the verge of war in 1881. In return for ■ supply of mules for their Madagascar expedition, the French supplied Menelik with artillery and firearms: gifts which were supplemented by the illicit enterprise of gun-runners, conspicuous among whom was that bizarre figure, Arthur Rimbaud, who enjoyed one of the most remarkable careers which the nineteenth century affords, formerly the boy prodigy of French poetry, now plying the trade of gun-runner and general merchant on the shores of the Red Sea!\*

The inevitable breach with Italy came in 1895; the ostensible pretext being an ambiguous clause in the treaty of Ucciali,† which

\* cf. E. Rickword, *Rimbaud. The Boy and The Poet*.

† The actual wording of the disputed clause in the Treaty of Ucciali was ■ follows: Article 17: 'His Majesty the King of the Kings of Ethiopia *consents* (italics in original) to employ the Government of His Majesty the King of Italy in treating of all matters that may arise with other powers and Governments.' Menelik argued with at least verbal exactitude, that consent can be withdrawn and is in no way binding. The real issue at stake, however, was, obviously the independence of Ethiopia.

the Italians understood ■ giving them entire control over the foreign policy of Abyssinia, whereas the Negus himself gave to it a much more limited scope. Italy, at this time, was under the political leadership of Signor Crispi (1819-1901), a former lieutenant of Garibaldi in his famous expedition of 'the thousand,' which added Naples and Sicily to United Italy (1860): now, however, ■ strong imperialist, and, in many ways, a forerunner of the Fascist regime. As Italy, under his leadership, stood upon her alleged rights, the dispute ended in war.

Crispi was not the man to let the case, and Italy's place in the sun, go by default. War, therefore, followed, and, after some minor reverses had been suffered by the Italians, the Italian general, Baratieri, the governor of Eritrea, advanced into the interior with an army of about fourteen thousand effectives; a force, it may be added, which was about the same strength ■ that of the British under Napier in 1867: ■ fact which demonstrates that the Italian high command entirely failed to grasp how exceptional were the circumstances which had given the British their easy success: this time it was the whole nation, united temporarily, at least, by the sagacious policy of Menelik, that was united against them.

In February 1896 the Italian Government became impatient at the slow progress of the Abyssinian war, whose difficulties and dangers it was far from appreciating adequately. After all, Italy had absolutely no experience of colonial warfare on a large scale. It, accordingly, secretly superseded Baratieri, and sent out a former governor of Eritrea, General Baldiserra, to supersede him. Baratieri, hearing that his successor was on the way out, determined upon bringing off a coup before he arrived; and, on the night of 29th February—1st March, attempted a surprise march across the intervening mountains in order to surprise the main Abyssinian army, more than a hundred thousand strong, which was encamped near the town of Adowa.

A night march through unknown mountainous country is never the easiest of military operations, and, in this case, either through accident or treachery on the part of his native guides, the separate Italian brigades lost their way, and, in the early morning of 1st March, found themselves separated from each other by a distance of several miles. In this unfortunate position they were attacked by the whole Abyssinian army under Menelik himself, and annihilated a fighting force, with

the loss of three general officers and over ten thousand in killed, wounded, and prisoners.

This battle, known from the nearest town ■ the battle of Adowa, ■■ the greatest colonial defeat ever experienced by an European army in the nineteenth century. The greatest, indeed, ever experienced by an imperialist power in Africa prior to Abd-el-Krim's great victory over the Spaniards at Annual in 1921. Politically, it ranks also as ■ decisive battle; since it ended the first Italian invasion of Ethiopia, and terminated Crispi's dream of a great Italian Empire in Africa, for another generation.\*

The total Italian army numbered four brigades and fifty-six guns, some fourteen thousand men in all, about 90 per cent white troops. The G.O.C., Baratieri himself escaped, but two generals, Arimondi, the second-in-command, and Dabormida, whose brigade were the heroes of the battle, were killed; and General Albertone was wounded and taken prisoner. The actual battle was fought in the mountains between Sauria, the site of the Italian camp, and Adowa, that of Menelik's.

\* The Adowa campaign is fully treated in the following works: *Mémoires d'Afrique*, 1892; by General O. Baratieri, and *The Campaign of Adowa and the Rise of Menelik*, by Colonel G. F. H. Berkeley.

Immediately upon the receipt of the news of Adowa the government of Signor Crispi resigned, 5th March, 1896. The new government immediately abandoned all aggressive designs against Ethiopia, whose independence was formally recognized by the ensuing treaty of peace.

Thus ignominiously ended the first effort of Italian imperialism to build up an African Empire. Its failure demonstrated two things clearly: firstly, that a warlike African nation, fighting on its own ground, is not to be despised ■ an antagonist, even by a great European power; a truth which had been already demonstrated, albeit on ■ much smaller scale, in the Zulu and Basuto wars in South Africa (e.g., the Zulu victory over the British at Isandlwana—21st January, 1879—was as complete in its smaller way as was that of the Abyssinians at Adowa) and it was to be subsequently proved again in Morocco. Secondly it proved that Italian imperialism was still an undeveloped stripling, whose claws were, as yet, not fully grown. One can hardly imagine that any of the great colonial powers would so easily have relinquished their prey after ■ single defeat, however severe. The fact that Italy did so, proved conclusively that she had not yet

been welded into ■ aggressive imperialist nation.

Hence, if it is traditionally true that 'adventures are to the adventurous,' it is equally true that imperialism can only be prosecuted by an imperialist nation. Pre-war Italian liberalism was not made of the genuine ruthless stuff of which successful empire-builders are made. For this, Italy had to wait a generation until the advent of Mussolini and the era of Italian Fascism. Now that this is at ease in the saddle it once more is looking for a place in the colonial sun; and in the annals of Italian imperialism Mussolini is the successor, and predestined avenger, of Crispi. Once more, there recurs the vision of a great African Empire; once more, the Tiber prepares to flow into the Red Sea! Yet once more, Ethiopia appears destined to be the first victim; and the conquest of that ancient land the starting point of that new Roman Empire which it is the avowed mission of Italian Fascism to create. The first Roman Empire began in Africa, why not the second?

## CHAPTER III

### THE END OF THE OPENING-UP OF AFRICA

#### ITALY PREPARES TO TRY AGAIN

**I**N the year 1922, on 30th October, the Fascist march on Rome overthrew the decrepit liberal regime in Italy, and installed in its place the Fascist dictatorship of Mussolini. At that time, and, indeed, up to the present time, the social content of Fascism as the 'black hundreds' of European conservatism, the Praetorian Guard, so to speak, of social and political reaction, has overshadowed its other, imperialistic, aspect. Nevertheless, Fascism has a foreign policy of imperialist aggrandizement, and one which is just as definite and just as characteristic as is its domestic policy of social repression and of social reaction. This fact is being illustrated by Italy at the present time, and, also, by Japan, a country at least semi-Fascist. There can be but little doubt that it will also be illustrated by Germany

before the world has got much older. This policy will repay a brief examination.

First, however, it may be remarked that, with regard to Italy herself the Government of Signor Mussolini represents the first strong Government which that country has known since the Middle Ages. (Indeed, ■ far as the whole country is concerned, the first strong Government since the fall of Rome, the last power to exercise effective domination over the whole peninsula.) As such, the Fascist Government has in large measure succeeded in overcoming the mediæval conditions and the shameful backwardness of the country, and has brought it up to the level of the most advanced countries of Western Europe and America.

This is the only meaning which can be attached to the Fascist boast, that, for the first time in history, Italy has become a modern, technical country, in which the trains run to time, the telegraph system works punctually and efficiently, and such mediæval survivals ■ brigandage and secret societies, have been finally eliminated (e.g. the Sicilian Mafia, etc.)

Viewed from the broad standpoint of sociology, this can only mean that Italy has now shed her earlier traditions and has become ■



100 per cent capitalist country. In short, that the Middle Ages only completely ended, as far as Italy was concerned, with the advent of the Fascist regime.

It is evident to anyone who glances understandingly at the course of modern history in the twentieth century, that economic and territorial imperialism does not, and, indeed, cannot, arise at any stage of modern history, but, in fact, only does so when capitalist society has attained an advanced level; one at which the need for economic and colonial expansion, for colonies, trade routes and markets, has become an imperative and urgent social and demographic need. It was, thus, no accident that colonial imperialism did not exist in the Middle Ages when ■ stagnant feudal economy prevailed; nor was it in any way an accident that it was in Great Britain, the birthplace of modern capitalism, that the need for expansion on a world scale first presented itself. Similarly Germany, in the nineteenth and Japan in the twentieth century, exhibit the spectacle of an agricultural (feudal or semi-feudal) country passing successively from mediævalism to capitalism, and from capitalism to imperialism. It is, in fact, ■ general law of modern society and of social development.

Italy is now falling under the operation of this law. Her political unity ■ not achieved until 1870, the culmination of her Risorgimento (i.e. national awakening). However, it was not until the Fascist era, the era of political reaction but of economic development, that Italy really moved forward into the era of capitalism and industrialism. Until then, national spirit was weak, local provincialism was rampant, and mediæval survivals were both numerous and primitive.

It is one of the paradoxes of our era that Italian Fascism, while owing its origins to ■ conservative reaction against Communism, yet has itself discharged a very radical rôle in bringing Italy up to date. It was not, indeed, until the dictatorship of Mussolini (1922-?) that Italy fully emerged into the broad stream of capitalist development.

From capitalism to imperialism is but a single step and, for a Great Power, a short one. In 1896, the facile retreat of Italy after ■ single defeat at Adowa, demonstrated that she was not yet ripe for imperialist expansion, ■ remarked above, no fully fledged imperialist power would have let go its hold and relinquished its prey so easily. The imperialism of Mussolini is made of sterner stuff than was that

of Crispi; and this, in its turn, accurately reflects its more advanced stage of economic and of political development. Now that Fascism is, at last, firmly established, and has effectually disposed, for the time being at least, of its internal opponents, an aggressive imperialist policy presents itself as the inevitable next step.

The theory of Fascism is nothing if not imperialistic. Its slogan of ■ new Roman Empire is too grandiose and visionary to be taken seriously in its integrity—after all, the Fascists can hardly hope to get as far as Hadrian's Northumbrian Wall! but it is symptomatic. One could not have imagined pre-war Italy voicing such an aspiration. To-day, imperialism is in the saddle; and the Fascist spokesmen are quite explicit on the need for empire.

Thus, ■ leading Fascist propagandist, Signor Luigi Villari, expresses himself quite bluntly in the foreword to his book, *The Expansion of Italy*. 'Every great country,' he says, 'every active people naturally tends to expand. Expansion may assume many forms, but is in itself no novelty. It has existed from time immemorial, and is neither good nor evil, but inevitable.' (Offensive as the conclusion may

be to the ardent ears of Fascist patriots, the logical conclusion of this generalization is that Italy was not a great nation until the arrival of Fascism; since certainly her desire to expand is of quite recent growth! This, however, seems somewhat less than just to the land which produced Dante, Da Vinci, and Michaelangelo.)

Another prominent spokesman of Italian Fascism, Signor Virginio Gayda, writing in the well-known Fascist theoretical organ, *Gerachia*, in June 1926, expresses himself in a similar strain, and, in particular, demands the modernization of Italy's military forces in order to assert effectually her claim to a place in the sun. And when we turn to the source of Fascist doctrine, to Mussolini himself, we find that he, too, expresses the most imperialistic sentiments. The following extract is taken from his pamphlet, *The Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism*, p. 11:

'And above all, Fascism, the more it considers and observes the future and the development of humanity quite apart from political considerations of the moment, believes neither in the possibility, nor in the utility, of perpetual peace. It thus repudiates the doctrine of pacifism—born of a renounci-

ation of the struggle and ■■ act of cowardice in the face of sacrifice. War alone brings up to its highest tension all human energy and puts the stamp of nobility upon the peoples who have the courage to meet it. All other trials are substitutes, which never really put men into the position where they have to make the great decision—the alternative of life and death. Thus ■ doctrine which is founded upon this harmful postulate of peace is hostile to Fascism.'

And p. 25: 'For Fascism, the growth of empire, that is to say, the expansion of the nation, is an essential manifestation of vitality and its opposite ■ sign of decadence. Peoples which are rising, or rising again after a period of decadence, are always Imperialistic; any renunciation is a sign of decay and of death.'

The foreign policy of Italian Fascism, like its domestic social policy of repression, is atavistic. It harks back to mediæval times, in its stark brutality, if not in its actual aims. One can truly say of its methods what Signor Nitti has said of its leader:\* 'He comes from very far; he is ■ mediæval condottiero' (i.e., soldier of fortune) 'lording it over ■ crowd of

\* cf. Francesco Nitti, *Bolshevism, Fascism, and Democracy*.

irresolute sheep.' At a time when even imperialism is compelled by public opinion to, at least, veil its designs under a protective mask of hypocrisy, that immemorial 'homage which falsehood pays to truth' (as La Rochefoucauld tersely expressed it) Fascism reverts to the most primitive jungle ethics of the 'nature red in tooth and claw' variety, and pours open scorn ■ even those all too feeble attempts of mankind to create ■ system of international law, wherewith to curb the naked brutalities of imperialism and its atavistic reliance on the reign of naked force.

This openly predatory character of Fascist imperialism is being signally illustrated at the present time. Whereas, in 1896, when Crispi made the first Italian attempt to conquer Ethiopia, there was then ■ pretence at international law, as far ■ the great powers of Europe were concerned. Then, as in the jungle, 'might was right,' and, as we have seen, it was Menelik's riflemen and not 'the right of self determination' which saved the Abyssinians from compulsory enrolment in the Italian colonial empire.

Now, however, even the great powers, including Italy, are members of the League of Nations, an institution whose pathetic failure,

hitherto, to justify the hopes of its supporters, does not in any way affect its significance ■ ■ sign of the times we live in. The fact that Italy is, again, preparing to attack Abyssinia, her fellow member of the League since 1923, demonstrates the purely atavistic character of Italian imperialism, and is of sinister augury for the future of mankind.

To-day, Italy is, once again, preparing to move forward. Once again, she searches the political horizon for the weakest point at which she can break through into the colonial world. Once again she finds it in the hinterland of the Red Sea. Once again, therefore, it is Ethiopia which is due to be attacked. It remains, accordingly, to analyse the nature and probable consequences of this enterprise; one which marks a new chapter in the history of imperialism; one, whose consequences can hardly fail to extend far beyond its immediate object.

The importance of Mussolini's projected African venture, as far as Europe herself is concerned, is expressed by saying that if undertaken, it constitutes the first open breach between the actual policy of ■ great European power, and its professions of belief in the efficacy and supremacy of international law, to which Italy, like all other members of the

League of Nations, has paid lip service in the past.

We proceed, therefore, first to glance at this aspect of the question, since there can be no doubt that the first casualty in a second Italian-Abyssinian war would be neither at Rome nor at Addis Ababa, but at Geneva. Such a war would undoubtedly constitute the first open defiance of the League of Nations in its continent of origin; the first open return of European society to the primeval jungle. The first casualty, in fact, of a second war between Italy and Ethiopia would, and could, only be the League of Nations itself. It is to this aspect of the subject that we first turn.



## CHAPTER IV

# MANCHURIA, ETHIOPIA, AND THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

THE conception of international law is still, unfortunately, in its infancy. Hitherto, the conception of law has remained merely one for domestic consumption, for use in regulating the social and legal relations of citizens with one another. It has failed altogether to dominate the foreign relations of powerful states in their mutual intercourse. This fact explains why it is that individuals are, sometimes, civilized, whereas the relationships of states are based, purely and simply, upon force: they are still the relationships of great *powers*.

The League of Nations represents the first attempt made upon an international scale, to introduce the conception of law into the mutual relations of states. As such it has an enduring historical significance; even though one is compelled to add that it has, so far, accomplished little and has been quite impotent to

exorcise the spectre of armaments. Indeed, it is much more probable, at the present time, that imperialism will end the League of Nations, than that the League of Nations will succeed in abolishing imperialism. Nevertheless, once ■ thing is done, its effects remain permanently: they cannot be totally undone. The idea of international law is now part of the social heritage of mankind. Whereas predatory imperialism represented morals and law prior to the twentieth century, now it is merely atavistic: it sins against the light.

Viewed from this standpoint, what we witness to-day in China and East Africa represents a retrograde step in the history of mankind. Araki (the Japanese War Lord) and Mussolini ■ consciously reverting to the ethics of an earlier age. They are putting the clock of history not forward, but back.

The very basis of the concept of international law presupposed the substitution of arbitration before an international tribunal, for the naked arbitrament of war. Such a tribunal is nothing without the power to enforce its decisions. (Who, for instance, would take ■ trial seriously, in which the judge lacked the means to enforce the decision of the court? Such trials would rightly be assigned to the

Gilbertian world of comic opera, whereto they properly belong.) Therefore, without effective 'sanctions' against ■■■ aggressor, i.e., sanctions which can be, and are, enforced, internationalism remains helpless before aggressive imperialism.

There is, thus, no doubt that the successful and entirely predatory attacks which Japan has made on Manchuria, and is making on China proper, at the time these lines are written, constituted a deadly blow to the whole framework of international law. Both Japan and China were, at the time the attacks originated, members of the League. It was a clear case of aggression, and the League did . . . nothing. It was a deadly blow at the world's progress, a sinister augury of the ultimate triumph of predatory imperialism over social progress, a triumph which can hardly fail to eventuate in ■ whole cycle of imperialist wars, which, if persisted in, must end in the destruction of civilization itself.

Mussolini is, at once, the teacher and the pupil of the Japanese. There is no doubt that the easy and hitherto uninterrupted run of success which the Japanese have enjoyed in China, has prompted the Italians to attempt a similar policy of cynical Machiavellism. (After

all, the original Machiavelli, 'Old Nick,' was an Italian, not ■ Japanese, by birth!) The projected Italian expedition to East Africa is, obviously, a sequel to that of Japan to China, it also constitutes ■ reversion to the naked aggression of earlier ages.

The present dismemberment of China constitutes a deadly illustration of the present weakness of the League of Nations. It could only protest, it could not protect. But, in the case of Japan, there was, at least, the excuse of distance. In the case of Italy, no such excuse can be proffered. If Italy attacks Ethiopia, and the inevitable appeal of the African Empire to the League is ignored, or results in merely impotent protests, that is the end of the League; and, what is of vastly greater importance, the end of that conception of international law, which, under the concrete circumstances of the twentieth century, represents the only alternative to the dissolution of contemporary civilization in a welter of imperialist war. If the League of Nations cannot stop Italy attacking Ethiopia, it might as well close down straight away.

It is, consequently, in ■ respect ■ exaggeration to assert that the League of Nations itself will be the first casualty in another Italian war

against Abyssinia. It is this fact which gives to the African imperialism of the Italian Duce an epochal importance which far transcends its immediate object. The defiance of the League by a European power could only mean its collapse. Then world imperialism or world revolution would become the only alternative. It must be admitted that this alternative begins to look increasingly probable.

We conclude, therefore, that, whereas the first invasion of Abyssinia by Italy, that of Crispi, had only a local importance and involved no world repercussions, that of Mussolini, the second invasion, must necessarily mark an epoch: one of retrogression. We hold no brief for imperialism in the past, but, at least, there was no practicable alternative. Now, such an alternative exists: if it is forcibly repudiated history must go back instead of forward. That way madness lies. In that case, the Fascist road to the Dark Continent will speedily become the road to a Dark Age.

**PART TWO**  
**MUSSOLINI'S AFRICAN EMPIRE**



## CHAPTER I

### ITALY AND COLONIAL IMPERIALISM

**E**VER since about the mid-nineteenth century the world has moved within the orbit of imperialism. Throughout this epoch, the expansion of the great powers has proceeded at an ever accelerated rate; and, to-day, the greater part of the world is, actually or virtually, the perquisite of ■ small number of great powers, who control it, either directly in the shape of colonies, or indirectly as 'spheres of influence,' i.e. territories which, while independent in name, are, in fact, dependent upon one or more of the great powers. (China has been hitherto the classic example of the latter kind of domination.)

In the occupation of the world by the great powers priority in time played ■ leading and important part. It was those empires which embarked earliest upon the paths of colonial imperialism that reaped the most ample harvest in the form of empire and loot. The early imperialism of Spain did not, it is true, succeed



in maintaining itself; but Portugal, and, yet more, Holland, still possess empires far in excess of their local political standing.

And in the great scramble for colonial acquisitions which began in the eighteenth century, and which reached its maximum expansion in the latter half of the nineteenth century, it was England, and, to a lesser extent, France, which reaped the maximum harvest. Africa, in particular, which supplied most of the raw materials for nineteenth century imperialist aggrandizement, was virtually partitioned between British and French imperialism. (Portugal and Belgium, the remaining African powers, may be considered, at any rate for all practical purposes, as vassal states, respectively of Britain and France.)

The latest powers in Europe to acquire political unity and industrial development of a capitalist nature, were Germany and Italy. In the case of both these countries it was not until 1870 that they achieved these prerequisites for subsequent imperialist expansion. (In the case of Germany by the agency of the Franco-Prussian war and the subsequent unification of the German nation in the Second Reich. In the case of Italy by the capture of Papal Rome, which united the whole Peninsula

under the rule of the House of Savoy.) Subsequently, the need for economic and colonial expansion quickly developed capitalism into imperialism. In pursuance of this latter policy both countries turned their attention to colonial expansion and both sought to expand; particularly in Africa *the* (continent *par excellence* of nineteenth century colonial expansion).

By the time, however, that German and Italian imperialism had set about their task in the closing decade of the nineteenth century, the process of colonial imperialism had virtually reached the stage of monopoly. The original 'squatters' had, by this time, 'staked' their claim; and all that Germany and Italy could do was to seize certain barren and economically valueless colonies, which were alone available for occupation by the newcomers. In the case of Italy we have already seen that she had to content herself with two poverty-stricken strips of land on the Red Sea (Eritrea and in Somaliland). Nor did Germany fare much better in her belated attempt to catch time by the forelock and catch up with the colonial rivals, who, being first in the field, had obtained a decisive start.

It is now matter of elementary history that the chief motive of the Anglo-French-German

war of 1914-18, ■■■ to effect, forcibly, a redivision of the colonial world, which, hitherto had been divided in a manner detrimental to the interest of the newcomer, Germany, who sought to utilize her tremendous military power, and her growing naval and economic strength to obtain that place in the colonial sun of which her belated political and economic development had deprived her (e.g. while the victorious Allies have repeatedly asserted Germany's war 'guilt,' yet, in reality, her only crime in the eyes of history was that she arrived too late upon the scene to secure the spoils in a peaceful manner). It is also matter of common knowledge that Germany is, again, claiming her place in the sun; and that, under the regime of Hitler, as formerly under that of the Kaiser, she is getting ready for a second imperialist war, in order to assert her imperialistic claims; claims which have been accentuated by her defeat in war, and by her colonial deprivation.

For Italy, however, this 'heroic' remedy is not available. Her military and her economic strength are, alike, insufficient to wage war against the heavily armed powers who dominate the Mediterranean. While the Fascist Government is making frenzied efforts to develop an

effective military tradition among the Italian people, yet, hitherto, Italy has had nothing even remotely resembling the military traditions of Prussian Germany; and such traditions take time to create; they are not made in a day; nor even in thirteen years, the duration of the Fascist regime. Moreover, Italy lacks not merely ■ first-class army, but, equally, war materials, and a strong defensive position, alike economic and strategic. The long undefended coast line, and the shut-in position of Italy, entirely dependent upon the Mediterranean for her very existence, make it impossible for her, despite all the rhetoric of her present dictator, ever to become a really first-class imperialist nation, ■ really great power. In fact, it is impossible to understand the modern development of Italian imperialism, unless one understands that Italy occupies an entirely anomalous position in the world of states. She is the weakest of the great powers, and the strongest of the second-rate powers. She is, in reality, a second-rate power, with the appetites—and the population—of ■ great power.

A glance at the history of her colonial expansion is sufficient to demonstrate this. As has already been indicated, even the conquest of

Abyssinia proved quite beyond the strength of the Italy of Crispi. Moreover, the fall of that imperialist statesman, consequent upon the failure of his Abyssinian enterprise, demonstrated ■ previously observed, how lacking were the Italian people of that day in the genuine material which constitutes a really imperialist people. Subsequently, all Italy could do was to look round for another weak power at whose expense she could lay the foundations of her empire.

It was not until 1911 that she found one in Turkey, then demoralized by the 'Young Turk' Revolution of 1909, and a very different proposition from the contemporary Turkey of Mustapha Kemal. Even so, Italy can hardly be said to have covered herself with glory in the military operations which ensued in North Africa. And while the subsequent peace treaty gave her Tripoli, Libya, and Cyrenaica, yet these provinces are largely desert, and are, to say the least of it, of very doubtful economic or strategic value. The Tripoli which is to-day administered by Marshal Balbo, is a very different place from the Tripoli of the Roman Emperor Septimius Severus (reigned A.D. 193-211), who was born there, at a time when Roman Tripoli was a highly de-

veloped territory, ■ its archæological remains testify.

The next venture of Italian imperialism was represented by its participation in the World War; one which brings the real weakness of Italy into sharp relief. For, it reveals clearly the salient characteristic of Italian imperialism, one which cannot long be veiled either by the Roman grandiloquence of the Fascists, or by the rhetorical bravado of Mussolini at the present time. Italy can never hope to fight a great power. She can never hope to hack her way out of the encircling Mediterranean. The utmost that she could, and can do is to play off the great powers against one another, in the hope of picking up the odd crumbs that may fall from their table. She is, in fact, the middleman of Europe.

This fact was very clearly brought out by her intervention in the World War. For some years prior to 1914, Italy had been ■ member of the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria, Italy). She was, thus, lined up on the Teutonic side in the approaching World War. Nevertheless, Italy did not join her allies upon the outbreak of hostilities. On the contrary, she carefully waited until she had made up her mind who

was going to win, before joining eventually with the Allies in May 1915.

This was the policy which her then Prime Minister, Signor Salandra, described at the time ■ 'sacred egoism.' 'Shameless opportunism' would have been ■ ■■■ correct description. Only they, however, are opportunists who are not strong enough to stand alone and to take action on their own behalf and as ■ result of their own volition. Her opportunist policy in 1914-5 was, undoubtedly, simply the expression of her political and military weakness.

This latter was demonstrated during the war itself, in which it is now common knowledge that 'sacred egoism' was, on several occasions, only saved from military collapse by a belated recourse to collective action on the part of the Allies. Caporetto indicated that, despite appearances, Italy was not a really great military power. Upon a European battlefield, and on a consequently larger scale, it reiterated the lesson of Adowa. Left to herself, Italy would, undoubtedly, have collapsed, in an exactly similar manner to her ignominious climbdown in 1896.

The hollow nature of Italian imperialism ■■■ exemplified at the Peace Conference after the

war. Italy still smarts ■ the recollection of that conference. It is, in fact, ■ truism on the part of Fascist orators to assert that Italy was 'betrayed' at Versailles. But, in reality, it was history itself that had betrayed her, when it had inaugurated the Atlantic Age and left Italy stranded in the land-locked Mediterranean, remote from the centres of political and economic power. In that sense, it was Columbus—who, by sailing West had inaugurated the Ocean Age—and not the post-war governments of Orlando and Nitti, who had betrayed Italy!

When Italy had entered the Great War in 1915, she had thought to bargain ■ a great power with other great powers; but the war had revealed her real inferiority. Imperialism is not sentimental, and its division of the world goes by strength, and not by reason. (Justice was never, in any case, ■■ imperialistic commodity.)

Consequently Italy got what her former Allies thought she was worth in the political and military sense. It was not very much, not nearly ■ much as she had expected to get, being merely ■ few strips of Austrian territory, and a few Greek islands in the Aegean. In Asia Minor—where she had expected to be 'in'



at the death of Turkey, nothing; in Africa, nothing; in the colonial world, nothing at all. It was a sorry conclusion to the policy of 'sacred egoism,' a sorry reward for cynical political perfidy. It almost reminds one of the cynical aphorism of Anatole France that a woman who sells her honour for money commits ■ sin, but that one who gives herself for nothing commits both ■ sin and a crime! Since 1919 Italy has nourished a grievance against the world, the grievance of ■ swindler who has himself been swindled. If successful imperialism is morally contemptible, how much more so is an unsuccessful one!

It was the 'moral' indignation felt by Italy at this demonstration of her real weakness that assisted to bring about the Fascist rise to power and the present regime of Mussolini. But, while Fascism never tires of denouncing the timidity and political 'agnosticism' of the preceding liberal regime, yet it will be found that in the nature and tempo of its imperialist expansion it differs but little from the earlier regime. While the economic development of the country has increased its tempo, and the population has increased at the rate of about one million in every three years, thus imposing an additional strain upon Italy's none too

abundant natural resources, and giving her a corresponding urge to expand, yet, the foreign policy of Italy is, still, inexorably conditioned by her weak military, economic, and political position. In spite of all the rhetorical bravado and bluff which has periodically characterized the Fascists in their attitude to foreign affairs, yet, it will be found on examination that, in its essentials, the foreign policy of Mussolini has been precisely the same ■ that of his despised liberal predecessors. Like them, he has alternately bullied his weaker neighbours and cajoled the great powers. In spite of all its magniloquent talk about reviving the Empire of the Cæsars, all that the new Italy has been able to accomplish in this direction has been to bombard ■ defenceless Greek island, Corfu (1923), to shoot down a few Libyan nomads in the deserts of North Africa and to threaten war periodically against her weaker neighbours, such as Yugoslavia (and the fear of France, the protector of Yugoslavia, was always sufficient to deter Italy from proceeding to the extreme length of war). In actual fact, and in the cold light of history, Italy under Fascism, ■ before it, is still incapable of the independent volition that always characterizes ■ strong imperialist power; she is, still, the middleman of Europe.

This fundamental weakness is apparent, to-day, in her projected Abyssinian campaign. This campaign is only made possible by the new race for armaments which characterizes Europe at the present time. Once again, as in pre-war days, we are back in the era of power-politics. Europe is, once again, dividing into two armed camps. It is only by flirting alternately with either camp that Mussolini can get permission to proceed with his expedition to Abyssinia. The attack on Addis Ababa began in Berlin. But for the advent to power of German Fascism, and the consequent race for armaments which that advent inaugurated, Mussolini could never have got the permission of the two great powers who control the Mediterranean, England and France, to undertake that expedition.

It is not to the interest of the British Empire to see Italian imperialism situated on the source of the Blue Nile, upon whose life-giving waters both the British colony of the Sudan and the British protectorate of Egypt depend for their very economic existence. Nor is it to the interest of France that a strong Italian imperialism shall confront it in the Mediterranean and in North Africa. These powers have it in their power at any time to close the Suez Canal and

the Straits of Gibraltar, thereby peacefully ending the Abyssinian enterprise. Since, for all his bravado, Mussolini is too much of a realist to imagine that he can fight Britain or France, still less the two together.

In return, however, for Italian support against Germany, it would seem that the Western European powers must be willing to allow Italy to go to Ethiopia unchecked. At least, it seems in the highest degree improbable that Italy would have gone so far in this matter without receiving some assurance sufficient to dispel her fears of foreign intervention.

If, therefore, as the Italian Fascists claim, it is a new Roman Empire that Mussolini hopes to inaugurate in Africa, it must be conceded that it is a Roman Empire by permission of the great powers! Before Italy can go to East Africa she must obtain permission to do so! This was not at all how the original Roman Empire, the Fascist prototype, was built up. Italy is reduced to taking the leavings of the colonial world. If Mussolini is, as his followers allege, the Julius Cæsar of this new Roman Empire, he is ■ Julius Cæsar who has to go round Europe cap in hand, asking permission to repeat the famous words, 'I came, I saw, I conquered.'

## CHAPTER II

### A ROMAN EMPIRE BY PERMISSION

**T**HE ancient Roman Empire began in Africa. It was the victorious issues of the two great Punic Wars (third century B.C.) which made Rome the dominant power in the Mediterranean basin. The title 'Africanus' (i.e. 'The African' 'The Conqueror of Africa') assumed by Scipio after his victory over Hannibal, was the precursor of the later host of titles wherewith succeeding Roman generals assumed similar emblems of victory from all the provinces, which, later on, made up the Roman Empire. Mussolini, or, at least his more credulous adherents, no doubt hope that the second Roman Empire, that of Fascism, will also start in Africa.

If, however, this is their expectation, it only serves to demonstrate that Fascism is stronger in archæological detail than in genuine historical understanding. Ancient Rome went to Africa in order to overcome her strongest rival, Carthage. When she measured herself with

Hannibal, it was the strongest link that encircled her which she assailed. When Mussolini goes to Abyssinia, he goes for precisely the opposite reason; because it is the weakest link in the encircling chain; and because he can never hope to break the other, stronger ones. The African enterprise of the new Rome is, therefore, a mere parody of that of the old one. In fact, it illustrates afresh the aphorism of Karl Marx that 'history repeats itself first ■ tragedy, then as farce.'\*

Italy is entirely confined within the Mediterranean. As the imperialists of ancient Rome discovered in the days of her first expansion, no great Italian Empire can be built up except by prior control of the great inland sea, the 'Great Sea' of antiquity, still the Great Sea of nascent Italian imperialism. For Italian imperialism to become a world empire, i.e. a really great power, it must first conquer the two great powers who control its encircling sea: England, who sits upon its two exits, the Straits of Gibraltar and the Suez Canal, and France, the dominant military power which borders upon the Mediterranean. If, consequently, it were a real Roman Empire, a really powerful Italian imperialism which was

\* cf. Karl Marx, *18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.

setting out upon its ■■■ of world conquest and spoliation, it would imitate ancient Rome in a like position, and would repeat its 'Carthago delenda est' ('Carthage must be destroyed') in the direction of one, or both, of its real rivals, British or/and French imperialism, whose Mediterranean hegemony is an effectual and insuperable barrier to any assumption of ■ world rôle on the part of Italian imperialism. It is, of course, obvious that until Italy can break out of the Mediterranean and claim the freedom of the Seven Seas, no real hegemony is possible on her part. A political rôle exclusively Mediterranean can, obviously, never be a world rôle.

It is, however, as already observed, transparently obvious that it is far beyond the power of Italy to fight either France or England, still less the two of them together. (The same would also be true of an imperialist Germany if she were to expand towards the Mediterranean, as advocated by one school of German imperialists.) Italy is thus, perforce, predestined to remain, *sine die*, in the Mediterranean. She is peremptorily debarred from rising from provincial to imperialist status, at least, in any true sense of the term. Her 'world empire' is, in actuality, reduced to snapping up ill-considered

trifles, wheresoever attainable. It is, in fact, ■■■ imperialism after the style of the universe of the philosopher, Epicurus, in whose, otherwise solid, architecture ■ few nooks and crannies (interstices) were discernible. The humble rôle of Italy is to find such obscure outlets in the world that surrounds her and she can hope to find them only on two precedent conditions: firstly, that no stronger power wants them, and secondly that Italy is able to conquer them. Such is the real, as distinct, from the fictitious and rhetorical rôle of the imperialism of Mussolini. It is, to be precise, the rôle of ■ man-eating panther, who is compelled, perforce, to leave the best prey to his more powerful confrères, the man-eating tigers, and dare not consequently poach on their tracks.

The projected Italian invasion of Abyssinia is the *reductio ad absurdum* of this hunt for a place in the sun. It represents the only possible acquisition for Italian expansion which conforms to both these precedent conditions. A glance at the Mediterranean world will reveal why this is so.

The natural outlet for Italy would be either North Africa or the Near East. But here England and France inexorably bar the way;



Britain holding Egypt; and France all North Africa, west of Tripoli. Similarly, in the Near East, France holds Syria, and Britain, Palestine and Irak (the latter in the form of ■ protectorate). In the Balkans Italy has nothing to expect, except hard knocks. As the dominant Mediterranean powers would never tolerate Italian expansion in the western Mediterranean, this leaves Asia Minor ■ the only possible field for Italian aggression, where there is ■ indigenous state, unprotected by a rival imperialist power. And it is matter of elementary history that Italy bargained with the Allies in 1915 for a large share of Turkish territory as the price of her entry into the war.

Unfortunately, however, for Mussolini, 'national regeneration' is not an Italian monopoly. The Turkey of Kemal Ataturk (Mustapha Kemal) is a very different proposition from that of pre-war times. Without going as far ■ to say that Turkey is now as strong as Italy, she is not now an opponent whom even a great power could afford to take lightly. And it is very doubtful whether Italy could overcome the tenacious resistance which the new Turkish nationalism would certainly offer when fighting ■ defensive war on her own ground. Moreover, such a war could hardly

be isolated. Hence, that line of expansion may also be considered closed.

Consequently Italy is, once again, compelled to turn to the Red Sea; and, perforce, turns her attention to that ancient Ethiopian Empire whom she last encountered in 1896 on the heights of Adowa. And since that Empire, while a member of the League of Nations since 1923, is otherwise little changed (since Africa, unhurried by the white man, changes slowly) Mussolini hopes with the aid of those new auxiliaries of western 'civilization,' tanks and aeroplanes, to succeed where Crispi failed.

Not that he can hope to succeed easily: the Abyssinians, unlike the Chinese, are ■ nation of warriors. (How Mussolini must envy the Japanese their contacts with the immemorially pacific civilization of China which offers such an easy prey to predatory imperialism!) Their country, moreover, is unsuited to Europeans—and Italy has only a few thousand native troops (the Eritrean Askari). It is arid, hot, mountainous, and admirably adapted to guerilla warfare. Moreover, the Abyssinians, albeit not on the European level of military technique, have developed considerably in this respect since 1896, and have at least the rudiments of military technique.

Hence, if Abyssinia is the easiest point at which Italy can hope to expand, yet it will not fall easily. Indeed, were it not for the Italian tanks and aeroplanes, it would not fall at all, any more than it fell before Crispi and Baratieri. Even with the aid of these technical auxiliaries, it will be, at best, ■■■ expensive business in life, and enormously costly in money; and failure to achieve it might bring about the fall of Mussolini, as it brought about that of Crispi. The fact, therefore, that Italy undertakes such a desperate venture, particularly at ■ time when any local dispute may easily be enlarged into a world war, signifies that the Fascist regime has now reached a desperate pass; one in which the real, as distinct from the fictitious, nature of Fascist imperialism is revealed.

For Fascism, and not merely in Italy, stands for a new type of imperialism, one that presages not merely an East African, but, eventually, a world, war. The world rôle of Japan in China, and of Italy in Ethiopia, is to afford open proof of ■■ unmistakable character that the real nature of Fascism is not imperialism in general, but ■ particular kind of imperialism, the imperialism of the disinherited nations.

### CHAPTER III

## FASCISM, THE IMPERIALISM OF THE DISINHERITED NATIONS

**F**ASCISM, as is common knowledge, first arose in Italy. Its founder and (so to speak) original patentee, was, of course, Mussolini, who was, and is, by far the ablest and most clear-headed of the crop of dictators who have sprung up in the post-war world. Prior to his adoption of the soubriquet 'Fascist' (in imitation of the fasces, lictor's rods, of ancient Rome) the Italian dictator was a political soldier of fortune; having (as is customary with soldiers of fortune) no fortune whatsoever. Consequently, he was for long an adherent of the Labour Movement and of the parties of the Left. Even when he passed over to reaction and became the prototype of Fascist dictators, he still continued to think fundamentally on Marxist lines, and it is ironical, but true, that Fascism has always remained Marxist in its world outlook, albeit that it is inverted Marx-

ism, Marxism pressed into the service of imperialism and of the bourgeoisie.

It is, indeed, this essentially Marxist character which sharply sunders Mussolini from traditional conservatives like Mr. Baldwin (cf. the speech of Mussolini at Salerno delivered on 7th July, 1935, where he spoke of the Abyssinian war being waged by a revolutionary government and nation. Here the language used is, obviously, that of the Left.) The Italian Fascist writer, Curzio Malaparte, in his book *La Technique du Coup d'état*, correctly observes that it is its Marxist character which severs Italian Fascism from German Nazism, and Mussolini, personally, from Hitler. Indeed Italian Fascism is really the only genuine kind. The German Nazis are not really Fascists; they are Prussian militarists with a demagogic varnish.

It is the historical peculiarity of Italian Fascism that it, or, rather, its leader, bases its world policy, and, accordingly, its imperialism, upon a theoretical analysis which represents the philosophy of Marxian Socialism turned upside down. The class war between capitalist and proletarian is transformed into an international struggle between successful and unsuccessful imperialism, between what Musso-

lini himself calls the 'plutocratic,' and the 'proletarian' nations, i.e. between those empires which have obtained their place in the sunlight by successful aggrandizement in the past and those empires which, for whatever reason, have, ■ far, failed to achieve world expansion and world empire.

Judged from this standpoint, which alone explains the actual state of the imperialist world to-day, England and France, and on a smaller scale, Holland, and even Portugal and Belgium, all colonial empires, monopolize the colonial world to the exclusion of the disinherited nations; of which nations, at present, Germany, Italy, and Japan are the chief. These two groups of nations Mussolini labels respectively as the 'plutocratic' and the 'proletarian' groups, and their necessarily hostile relations, he describes as an inevitable 'class struggle.'

Stripped of its pseudo-Socialist verbiage, this definition is, in reality, exceedingly illuminating. It exemplifies that unequal rate of development which Lenin, in his work on imperialism long ago (1915) indicated as the primary characteristic of present-day imperialism. It illustrates the impossibility of dividing up the world in such a manner as to satisfy all

the imperialist nations; and it brings into sharp relief the necessity, from the standpoint of the unsuccessful, the 'proletarian' nations, of periodically waging war for the redivision of the world in their own interest.

It is from this standpoint that Italy, and, also, her 'proletarian' confrères, Germany and Japan, regard the peace treaties which ended the first imperialist war, the World War. From this standpoint, the peace treaties divided the colonial world in the interest of the 'plutocratic' empires, Great Britain and France, and their minor satellites. Hence, these treaties are neither eternal nor sacred. On the contrary, they are merely temporary conveniences suitable to the empires already in possession; to be amended by the rising empires, which, at present dispossessed, must eventually seek their place in the colonial sun, since both political and demographic causes will eventually compel them to—in the words of Mussolini himself—either 'expand or explode.'

According to this point of view the pacifism of the possessing powers is merely 'Peck-sniffian humbug' (in the elegant words of Signor Villari, cf. *The Expansion of Italy*). Similarly, the League of Nations is, when observed from this angle, merely an insurance

agency on the part of the present division of the world, and of that group of powers which benefit from it. Upon this subject, the *Popolo d'Italia*, the personal organ of Mussolini, recently expressed itself with great energy and in unambiguous language. (We quote verbatim): 'The priests of Geneva are the patriarchs of the past. They are conservative and dogmatic. But history is revolutionary. The young peoples, who need a place in the sun, end by withdrawing one after the other from Geneva. The League is an insurance among established empires, and as such it will go on working, condemning all those who do not accept for all eternity the existing injustices. The example of Japan and Germany shows that the mummification of history cannot be imposed and that presence at Geneva is a service rendered to those who benefit from it, not an obligation.' Nor is this the language of mere idle threats. Germany and Japan have already left the League of Nations. Italy will undoubtedly do so if the League endeavours to compel her to act as a real, and not as a nominal member of the League, in relation to her fellow member, Abyssinia. In the hard pitiless glare of imperialist realities, the vague aspirations towards peace, to be achieved without funda-



mental social change, begin to look exceedingly tenuous and unsubstantial. It is a case of a mythology being shipwrecked on the hard rocks of reality.

One sees, therefore, that Fascism stands, in reality, for a foreign policy as definite as is its domestic policy of social reaction and repression. It represents the imperialism of the disinherited, of the dispossessed. To attain its inheritance Fascism needs, and prepares for, war, and war can, obviously, be of two kinds, war of imperialist versus imperialist, or, of imperialist versus primitive nations. Formerly, in the nineteenth century, the second kind predominated. To-day, with the contraction of the world, the first type, as observed above, must necessarily do so.

Already we see one great Fascist empire, Germany, forced to prepare for war in Europe, because there are no more primitive races left to conquer. (How much more pleasant it would be for Hitler if Soviet Russia adhered to the pacifist theories of Tolstoy instead of to the doctrines of Lenin!) China and Ethiopia out of the way, Japan and Italy will be similarly placed. At present, as observed previously, they represent the last life insurances for mankind against world war. Once out of the way

any redivision of the world can only be effected by a world war. The end of the cycle of colonial wars must necessarily mean the beginning of the cycle of world wars. The nemesis of imperialism approaches.

[Note on imperialism and the contraction of the world.—Broadly one can say that the world was 'discovered' in the sixteenth century, colonized in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and really opened-up and effectually conquered in the nineteenth century. In so far, therefore, as imperialism can be said to have performed any useful function, this was completed by the end of the nineteenth century when it had, willy nilly, put the world on the map. If, as appears to be the opinion of many keen intellects, a 'world state' is a desirable object to aim at, then imperialism, no matter how brutal, sordid, and perfidious were its methods, must be allowed to have discharged, albeit unconsciously, a useful task in opening up the world, and, thereby, in making its future unity possible. That phase, however, is now concluded.

As the end of colonial expansion comes in sight—and it is the achievement of this end which gives the contemporary policy of Japan and Italian imperialism its significance for

world history—every redivision of the world means necessarily a world war. Consequently, it is the inevitable fate of imperialism ultimately to dissolve in a cloud of homicide. Nor is it possible for any kind of civilization to survive for long this serial cycle of world wars.

Accordingly, every colonial war is now, ultimately, ■ nail in the coffin of civilization itself. The world is now too small to be able to afford an imperialist system. The contraction of the world, due to science, has made this social order impossible. As suggested above, it now requires the solar system for its proper expansion! Neither China nor Ethiopia represents an adequate substitute.]

## CHAPTER IV

### ITALY IN ETHIOPIA

#### THE PROLOGUE TO A SECOND WORLD WAR

THE project of the conquest of the Ethiopian Empire is, thus, political in character. It arises both from the necessity of Italy to expand, and from her actual weakness, which forbids successful expansion at the cost of any really powerful nation. The attack of Italy on Ethiopia is, indeed, as plain and shameless an example of banditry as anything which even the sordid annals of political Machiavellism can show. The reasons for the Abyssinian expedition are, briefly, as follows: (*a*) desire to bolster up the tottering Fascist regime by an easy, but spectacular success; (*b*) the economic exploitation of Abyssinia, which is, in particular, suitable for growing cotton, and which is reputed to possess oil, that 'open sesame' of modern commercial enterprise; (*c*) in order to strengthen the hold of Italy on the Indian

Ocean and in East Africa, in view of ■ possible future redivision of the colonial world.

That the idea of such ■ redivision is present in the mind of the present-day directors of Italian imperialism is proved by the following illuminating remarks of Signor Villari, in his authoritative work, previously quoted, on 'the expansion of Italy.' 'For the present she' (i.e. Italy) 'must do without colonies, or at all events make the best of an inadequate colonial dominion. But if in the future there is ■ reshuffling of colonial territories, mandated or otherwise, Italy is determined to have her proper share and not to let herself be again bamboozled as she was at the Paris Peace Conference by a combination of rival imperialisms camouflaged under the specious guise of humanitarian principles and Pecksniffian virtue.' (Villari *ut supra*, p. 44.)

The causes of the second Italian-Ethiopian war are, accordingly, political and economic in character. There is, however, another reason for the present time being chosen for the enterprise, one of a purely military character.

We have already seen that it is only the disturbed state of Europe, now definitely committed to ■ pre-war period of intensive rearmament, that allows Mussolini to go to

Africa, confident that the mutual jealousy of the powers will permit him to get away with the audacious enterprise. This is so now; but in a few years' time it may not be so. By then, either a European ■■■ may put Italy—and Fascism, plus its 'Roman' Empire—out of business, or, at least the pace of rearmament may become so rapid and the consequent military situation may have become ■ dangerous, particularly in Central Europe, and on the northern frontier of Italy, that it will then be impossible for Mussolini to weaken Italy by an overseas expedition, so long, costly, and harassing, as the conquest of Ethiopia is likely to prove.

If Italy wishes to act, she must act now. There is, emphatically, no time to lose. (Even dictators are conditioned by circumstances which dictate their policy!) And no one knows better than does Mussolini how bitterly Germany resented his prompt action, which, after the death of Dollfuss, prevented Austria from effecting her *anschluss*—union—with Germany (August 1934). If, as seems probable, German expansion initiates the next war, it is most unlikely that Italy either could, or would, keep out of it. And she lacks either the military or the economic resources to wage war simul-

taneously in both Austria and Abyssinia, on the Alps and beyond the sea.

From the political standpoint, we have already seen that the coming Abyssinian war marks an epoch, that of the conclusion of the era of colonial wars, and the commencement of that of inter-imperialist, of world wars. From the military standpoint, likewise, the coming war is of great interest.

Observed from this angle, it can be defined with essential accuracy as the Balkan war of the second world war, i.e. in its initial trial of the new military technique which has evolved since 1918, on a small, ■ local scale, it prepares the way for the use of that technique on the vast scale which the next world war will undoubtedly provide. In this sense, it re-enacts the rôle which was discharged by the Balkan war of 1912-3, in which, as is now evident in retrospect, the military technique of the twentieth century, later revealed on a large scale in the World War, was first tentatively tried out on the local Balkan battlefields.

What are the military perspectives of a second Italian-Abyssinian war? To analyse these at all fruitfully, it is first necessary to glance at the combatants, and to consider what

are the resources, both military and natural, of which they dispose.

The advantages possessed by the African Empire may be summarized briefly as follows: Firstly, the enormous extent of the country, with its lack of exact geographical surveys and of modern means of communication, such as railways, and even good modern roads—in respect to its geography Abyssinia still retains the characteristic of ■ hermit nation, in the sense that the natives are reticent of giving information to foreigners and the country is still largely unexplored, e.g. who could give off-hand, and without reference, the names of half a dozen Abyssinian towns or provinces? There is only one railroad in the whole of Abyssinia. This runs from the French port of Djibuti in French Somaliland to Addis Ababa, the capital of Abyssinia.

Secondly, the country is about as unsuitable for European military operations as could conceivably be imagined; the greater part of it is mountain or desert; it is situated entirely within the tropics, and its sultry atmosphere, combined with a perennial shortage of water, makes the task of an invading army, particularly of ■ large one, of the most unenviable nature conceivable. In this connection, the present



Ethiopian Negus, Haile Sellassie (i.e., 'Holy Trinity,' better known to Europeans by his earlier title ■ regent, Ras Tafari) can truthfully paraphrase the famous remark of Tsar Nicholas I, at the time of the Crimean War. Just ■ the Tsar declared that his best generals were General January, and General February, so the Abyssinian Negus can observe, equally correctly, that General Fever, and (still more formidable) General Thirst, are his best commanders, and the best and most useful Ethiopian patriots.

Last, but not necessarily least, there is the character of Abyssinian war, one in which man and nature blend in perfect unison. The population of the vast empire is small, not more than ten millions, and perhaps, not more than six, according to the various estimates. (The vagueness of its census demonstrates what a *terra incognita* the Ethiopian Empire still is.) But, as is customary among barbaric nations, every man is ■ warrior.

Every Ethiopian is a warrior, just ■ was every Maori, Zulu, or Sudanese Dervish; a fact which British armies have found to their cost at different times in the course of the military expansion of the British Empire. But, in Abyssinia, it is not the war of pitched battles,

but the war of ambushes and attrition, guerilla warfare in all its forms and horrors, that the Italians will have to face, and will have abundant cause to fear. Every Abyssinian is ■ rifleman, and every gorge or amba (i.e., flat-topped hill) is a potential death-trap. Moreover, the Abyssinians, are, apart from the ruling Amharic race, almost pure barbarians. Among them, the customs of (so called) civilized war do not apply, and one cannot envy the lot of any Italian prisoner who falls into the hands of such enemies. The mutilated dead found on the battlefield of Adowa will be reduplicated and multiplied in the course of ■ long-drawn guerilla warfare.

The Abyssinian strength thus lies in the triple alliance of ■ inaccessible country, an inhospitable climate, leading to all sorts of transport difficulties and both a people and country ideally suited for ■ long and wearing defensive warfare of ■ guerilla nature. The difficulties which have long worried the British in their wars on the North-West Frontier of India, and which completely baffled the Spanish generals of Alfonso XIII in their war in Morocco against Abd-el-Krim and his Riff warriors, will be experienced by the Italians, only on ■ vaster terrain, against a more numer-

ous foe, and under climatic and physical conditions of, probably, even greater difficulty.

It is a formidable task that Mussolini undertakes. We repeat; How he must wish that the Ethiopians, like the Chinese victims of his Japanese confrères, had been civilized by a Confucius to the extent of neglecting military technique, and of despising the arts of war!

Against this formidable combination of man and nature, what are the Italian advantages which induce the Duce to stake the future of his regime on the success of this apparently unpropitious enterprise? Briefly and succinctly, they may be described as threefold also: tanks, aeroplanes, and an homogeneous command. In a word, technique.

Whereas, in 1896, General Baratieri had to seek out the Abyssinian army, in order to achieve victory in the field, the Italians will seek to cripple the tenacious resistance of the enemy by repeated air raids and punitive expeditions by means of their tanks. Thus, from the military standpoint, such a war could not fail to be of the greatest technical interest as trying out twentieth century military science against both the natural hostility of the primeval wilderness, and the organized hostility of a nation, whose military technique, is,

perhaps, on ■ level with that of the mid-nineteenth century—though its feudal army organization dates back to the European Middle Ages. It is, accordingly, permissible to weigh the possible advantages of the Italian technique of war over the Abyssinian.

In a succession of pitched battles, such ■ will, no doubt, follow the invasion of Ethiopia, there is little doubt that the Italian combination of ■ scientific technique and a homogeneous command would be irresistible. In modern war, an ounce of science is worth ■ ton of courage. The warriors who bore down Dabor-mida's heroic brigade at Adowa, by sheer weight of numbers and berserker frenzy, can make little headway against tanks and machine-guns; while aircraft can not merely bomb the concentration of Abyssinian troops, but can infallibly prevent the blunders of lack of uniformity and mistaken direction, which, coupled with the surprise attack of the Abyssinians, brought about the disaster which befell the Italian army at Adowa. (Cf. Colonel G. F. H. Berkeley, *The Campaign of Adowa*.)

In fact, so certain is the defeat of the Abyssinian army in the open field, since, in a technical age, mere brute courage counts for little, that, undoubtedly, their correct policy

would be to avoid battle and to retreat into the interior. (After all, the Ark of the Covenant, which forms the centre of an Ethiopian army, is no life insurance against modern artillery.)

This, however, is a military operation which a feudal army can never perform, on account both of its lack of an organized commissariat, and of an homogeneous command capable of unifying and co-ordinating its movements.

Moreover, in the case of the Abyssinians 'appetite comes with eating'; having beaten the Italians once, they, no doubt, imagine that they can do it again; since the bulk of the nation still lives under the conditions of a hermit empire, and, knowing little, and caring less about the outside world, they do not realize the vast difference that exists between the regiments of Baratieri, and the Italian air force as organized by Marshal Balbo and his fellow transatlantic fliers. This consequent over-confidence will probably bring about initial disaster.

Apart from a small imperial bodyguard, the Abyssinian army is still organized mainly on feudal lines. It thus resembles the armies of mediæval Europe. Each local contingent following its own feudal lord—Ras—and bringing its own provisions for the campaign. Such

armies can only remain in the field for ■ short time. Except that they have rifles and some modern artillery, the present-day Abyssinian army is very similar to the highland clans who followed the Young Pretender, Charles Edward, in the Jacobite rising of 1745. Like its Scotch prototype, its strength lies in its mobility and its wild impetuous courage. The main Abyssinian weapon is the rifle. There are ■ few aeroplanes, and, it is reported, one tank! (This, no doubt, like the solitary elephant of Mr. Stephen Leacock, will 'dash off in all directions'! Ironically enough, it was presented to the present Negus by ■ Italian visitor, the Duke of the Abruzzi.) There are also some foreign military instructors, whose hastily imparted drill will, probably, do more harm than good, since it is axiomatic that 'a little knowledge is ■ dangerous thing,' and such ■ natural fighter as a warlike barbarian, is much more formidable than ■ half-trained soldier. The annals of colonial war demonstrate infallibly that it takes time to accustom good native warriors to the alien methods of civilized war. Abd-el-Krim, for instance, would not have been half ■ formidable as he proved to be, had he fought the Spaniards in their way, and not in his. Similarly, it is when the Abyssinians

take to the mountains that the trouble will really start for Italy.

It appears to be generally conceded by military experts that future wars will be decided, largely at least, in the air. In the case of Abyssinia, however, the use of aeroplanes will be gravely limited by two obvious considerations. Firstly, that there is little that they can bomb; since there are few towns of any size in Abyssinia, and even in these the number of buildings, substantial enough to form a target, is small. (In point of fact, the chief buildings in Addis Ababa, the present capital of Abyssinia, which are, so to speak, bomb-inviting, are the foreign legations, whose violent destruction from the air would scarcely be an asset to a country so entirely dependent on the good will of the great powers as is Italy.) The only other large buildings are the churches, whose violent destruction by Roman Catholic 'heretics,' would rouse the fanatically religious natives to a yet more fierce resistance. Primitive peoples do not give 'hostages to fortune' in the shape of substantial houses and solid assets of a tangible nature. As the English have discovered on the North-West Frontier of India, and the French and Spaniards in Morocco, bombing aeroplanes lose much of

their potency when directed against people who live in wooden huts which can be destroyed in ■ minute, and rebuilt inside an hour. The second Ethiopian war will probably demonstrate this fact on a large scale.

Secondly, air warfare in Abyssinia labours under this additional handicap, that the great altitude of the Abyssinian plateau makes it difficult, if not impossible, for aeroplanes flying in that rarefied atmosphere, to carry ■ full bombing apparatus. Therefore, against Addis Ababa, situated eight thousand feet above sea level, air raids may be considerably less formidable than they would be if directed against a European metropolis. Consequently these factors militate against the use of the superior Italian technique; just as, also, the inaccessible nature of the mountains may prove obstacles beyond the power of even tanks to negotiate.

Accordingly, it appears possible from the nature of the combatants, to predict the character of the coming war. It will consist of three successive stages, two, probably brief, the third long-drawn-out and arduous in the extreme. First, swift and destructive air raids on the Abyssinian capital and other towns; raids which will infuriate the Africans, but will not



seriously weaken the resistance of an agricultural and cattle-raising people. (The natives will have much more ■■■ to fear the bombing of their flocks, i.e., their food supply, than that of their transitory dwellings.) Secondly, an Italian advance into the interior, one probably accompanied by desperate battles, since the haughty Abyssinian race has never, thus far, allowed ■ foreign invader to enter its fatherland unopposed, and a mountain race changes slowly.

In such engagements, the great technical superiority of the Italians over the Abyssinians will give them eventual victory, though only after desperate fighting. We do not anticipate another Adowa, at any rate, in the early stages of the war. (The vast technical superiority of the Italians is now being exemplified by the long delay which is (July 1935) elapsing between the first notice of Italian hostility and the actual invasion. The imperialist spider can afford to make his preparations gradually and cynically in the sight of the fly who is to be devoured in the autumn at the conclusion of the summer rains, when military operations become feasible. Abyssinia, without trained technicians and factories, can only look on helplessly.)

We estimate that the Italian tanks and aeroplanes will prove too much for the unsophisticated courage of the African warriors, and that the Italian invasion of Abyssinia will succeed, at least to the extent of occupying the chief towns. This, however, will only represent the beginning of the war, ■ Italy will then find to her cost. The third, the real stage of the war will start when the Ethiopians take to the mountains, and the guerilla war of the whole nation starts against the invader.

To obtain a correct idea as to what this means, we must go back to the Spanish national war against Napoleon in the Peninsular war, when no French despatch could be sent from one village to another without the escort of a squadron of cavalry. Or to the very similar Irish war at the time of the 'Troubles' (1917-21). This will be the real trial for the Italians, since not merely will they have against them all the disadvantages already enumerated, but also the gravest difficulties at home to contend with.

As remarked above, guerilla warfare in Africa is no joke. The Riffs who broke the military power of Spain—and brought down the Spanish monarchy into the bargain—demonstrated how even a handful of resolute

men can hold their native mountains against great odds in both ■■■ and technique. In European history, the Swiss owe their place in the roll of nations to their genius for guerilla warfare. And in Ethiopia the boast of the present Negus, Ras Tafari, that, come what may, 'the Ethiopians have always stood proud and free upon their native mountains,' is not an idle one; as the previous invasions of Abyssinia enumerated in our first chapter, have conclusively demonstrated.

The African peoples have a genius for guerilla warfare. There have never in the history of irregular war, even in Spain, its native land, been greater defensive strategists, greater masters of guerilla warfare, than Abdel-Krim, who fought Spain successfully single-handed, and then required the whole strength of France, the greatest contemporary military power, to suppress him; or than Moshesh, the founder of the Basuto nation, who created the strongest native race in South Africa out of a handful of broken refugees fleeing before the Zulus; and who successively, and successfully, held the mountains of Basutoland, the 'Switzerland of South Africa,' against Zulus, Matabele, Dutch (Boers) and British (c. 1825-1870.)

On a vaster terrain and with far greater numbers the second war between Italy and Ethiopia will illustrate this capacity for war to the knife, the 'all in' war of the nation, as against the professional war of the army.\*

We conclude, therefore, that, even if attended by initial success on the part of Italy, the second war between Italy and Abyssinia will be long, bloody, indescribably horrible, and exhausting. Can Italy, already in a desperate economic state and seething with discontent, hold out; and if not, what events will her African war originate? Here again, this 'Balkan war' has in it the possibility of lighting a world conflagration. It was, of course, the Balkan war which roused that wave of pan-Slavic feeling that was the cause of the assassination of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand at Serajevo, and, therefore, was the immediate cause of the world war.

As we have seen, the failure of the first Abyssinian expedition brought about the downfall of Crispi, the predecessor of Italian Fascism. Will the second end in failure, and

\* For the Riff war cf. *Earmarked for Hell*, by R. Sender (Wishart). For the Basuto war against Britain cf. Sir G. Lagden, *The Basutos* (Hutchinson). The present writer hopes to deal subsequently with some of the great figures of African history, whose great qualities are not known as they should be.

in the fall of Mussolini? And, if so, what will ensue? For whereas the fall of Crispi was ■ local event only, that of the Duce would, in the present volcanic state of the world, have repercussions far beyond Italy and might even change the face of human history. For this reason, while clairvoyance is far from the writer's thought, this possible eventuality will repay ■ brief consideration on account of the vast possibilities that it would necessarily entail.

## CHAPTER V

### EXIT MUSSOLINI?

**T**HE main driving force behind the policy of Italian imperialism in East Africa is, undoubtedly, the desire on the part of Italian Fascism to register a spectacular success in the field of foreign policy: in order to counteract the growing anger of the Italian masses at the oppressive methods of the dictatorship and at the rapidly worsening conditions, expressed in low wages, growing unemployment, and budget deficits, which the much trumpeted cure-all of the corporative economics of Fascism has entirely failed to remedy. While economic, territorial, and strategic considerations all play their part, yet they are subordinate to this fundamental necessity for prestige. After all, a victorious war is the traditional remedy of a hard-pressed dictatorship for its domestic failures, and supplies the antidote to its growing unpopularity. (That this is ■■■ demonstrated conclusively at the end of June, when Abyssinia,

field, as in 1896 at Adowa. As already suggested, her trial will come in the long-drawn-out guerilla war which must follow upon her initial successes. Such a ■■■ could bring about the defeat of Italy, and, therefore, the fall of Mussolini, in one of three ways: economic exhaustion, intervention of the great powers, and revolution at home. In view of their possible occurrence and importance, these potential eventualities will repay ■ brief glance.

It is quite certain that none of the great powers wants to see Italy conquer Abyssinia. France wants no Italian aggrandizement in Africa; Japan, who has recently obtained ■ large cotton-growing concession near Lake Tsana (some two million acres) and who has economic difficulties equal to, and similar to those of Italy, has no desire for an Italian monopoly to be established there. (The objections of Great Britain are so numerous that they will repay a later and more detailed consideration.) Germany, alone among the great powers, may prefer Italy to turn her eyes away from Austria and towards Abyssinia, but yet even she cannot desire to see Italy permanently strengthened by the addition of ■ vast African Empire, with immense potential resources of raw materials, made available by

exploitation of ■ industrial character. (Even now, rumour has it that the Negus is getting more munitions from Germany than from any other source. Germany herself is known to desire ■ colonial empire, and, in particular, ■ place in the African sun.)

Nevertheless the precarious balance of power which to-day prevails in Europe enables Mussolini to gain the necessary permission for his African expedition, by threatening to throw his weight into the balance of the contending powers. This makes it difficult for either Germany, France, or Great Britain, the three great powers capable of stopping the Italian expedition, to interfere. In the present disturbed state of Europe, with her mounting armaments and Balkanizing politics, no one knows whether he will not, before long, need all the allies he can get, including Italy. To be the middleman, the make-weight of Europe, has its advantages in such ■ position; and Mussolini, the ex-proletarian, who has seen life in the raw, knows how to take advantage of this state of things to the full.

At the start of the Italian war against Ethiopia we do not, therefore, anticipate that the verbal protests of the League of Nations will have behind them that effectual backing



of the great powers, without which 'sanctions' cannot be effectively applied, or Mussolini be successfully intimidated. The success of Japan, by similarly ruthless methods of Realpolitik in China, gives little hope from the League of Nations. It would be the Gran Chaco all over again. Mussolini, the cynical realist, has chosen his time so well that there is but little chance of Europe combining to restrain the aggressor and of backing up words, which, to the Fascists, are 'mere sound and fury signifying nothing,' by deeds which might effectively restrain them.

The only chance for such an intervention lies in the immediate utilization of all the forces of public opinion against what is, on any liberal analysis, one of the most predatory and brutal examples of political highway robbery that even imperialist history can show.

Hitherto, the League of Nations has been able only to stop small wars which the great powers do not want. Its life and death test will come when it has to stop a great power making war against a small one. It failed completely in 1931 against Japan: as remarked above, if it fails in the case of Italy in 1935, then Africa, which has been the grave of so many white reputations, will be the grave of Geneva.

In that eventuality Mussolini will have ended the era of conciliation and international liberalism, of which President Wilson was the founder, the League of Nations the symbol, and Locarno (October 1925) the high-water mark. Then, the cynical statecraft of Machiavelli will, once more, resume its ancient empire over European civilization.

Failing intervention by the League, or by the individual great powers, there remain the possibilities of economic collapse and consequent revolution for Italy. These possibilities can be considered best in their mutual relation; since, costly as a long-drawn-out Ethiopian war would be, it is unlikely that it would be ended by financial collapse, pure and simple: one must, after all, give the Italian Government credit for some elementary prevision in the matter. No one can know better than does Mussolini that he stakes his political future and even the existence of his regime, on his African enterprise.

Revolution, however, is a contingency against which even dictators cannot take out a secure insurance policy. While the rigid press censorship, customary in Fascist countries, makes the testing of the real state of public opinion a virtual impossibility, yet it is certain that

Fascism has long lost any popularity it originally may have possessed; and it appears unlikely that the second Abyssinian war is any more popular among the Italian people than was the first, whose disastrous issue brought down the imperialist government of Crispi.

A long war, with its tale of fever, disease, and the hundred and one horrors incidental to ■ colonial war, could easily multiply the anti-Fascist revolt a hundredfold. Already there are reports of sporadic revolts all over Italy; and it is certain that several foreign journalists have been summarily expelled from the kingdom for telling the truth, or, at least, some of it, regarding the genuine reactions of the Italian people towards the prospective immolation of their youth upon the pitiless altar of 'the black sphinx of Africa,' ■ the opponents of Crispi called it at the time of the first Abyssinian war.

Even the Italian ruling class is said to be disunited. In particular the King, Victor Emmanuel III, is persistently reported to be opposed to the African war. Possibly his majesty has studied Spanish history, and realizes that it was Morocco and the Riff war, which brought down the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera—whom Alfonso XIII once introduced to Victor Emmanuel as his 'Mussolini'!

And the Italian monarch may also have noticed, since the House of Savoy, ■ its history testifies, does not lack political shrewdness, that the downfall of Primo de Rivera (January 1930), was followed, after ■ very brief interval, by the downfall of Alfonso XIII (April 1931).

The Bourbons ended in Africa: why not the House of Savoy? (And while it is the historic characteristic of the Bourbons 'to learn nothing and forget nothing,' the House of Savoy has a well-earned reputation for political ability.)

It seems probable that ■ long-drawn-out and costly war—and such a war is a virtual certainty (Mussolini will not end two thousand years independence in ■ week-end!)—may very easily unite both the Italian masses and the liberal bourgeoisie against the predatory policy of Mussolini. If so, the lictors' rods may prove less potent than was the rod of Moses in opening up ■ passage across the Red Sea.

Fascism stands to-day in relation to our contemporary world for the maximum degree of social reaction and of predatory imperialism of the most open and cynical kind. We hold no brief for the imperialism of bygone ages, including our own; but, at least, it was the only creed known, practised and available at the time. In the case of Fascism one cannot repeat

too often that its salient feature is that it is openly atavistic: it sins against the light. If, therefore, as ■ result of the second Abyssinian war, Mussolini makes his exit from history, and, with him, the whole black-shirted regime, then humanity, and not least the Italian people, will have turned over ■ new historical page.

For this reason the defence of Ethiopia is no mere archaeological or sentimental interest, but is, on the contrary, a matter of burning interest to the whole human race, and not least to the European nations now ground beneath the heel of Fascist reaction, militarism, and imperialism. It is not merely the independence of that ancient empire which is at stake. It is not merely the sentimental preservation of ■ link with biblical and classical times; but it is human liberty and human progress itself that are involved. The victory of Mussolini means the victory of cynical atavism, of political jungle ethics, the degradation of human relationships to the level of mediæval brigandage, the substitution of 'King Kong' for human reason as the arbiter of our civilized destiny.

The victory of Italian Fascism would benefit no one, not even the Italians, since it would consign the land of Mazzini and Garibaldi to ■■ indefinite period of slavery and war. In

fact, the success of Mussolini's African policy would strengthen every reactionary force, and would weaken every progressive force in the contemporary world. It would add yet another nail to the coffin of our civilization.

For this reason the public opinion of the world should rally to the side of Abyssinia; since its victory means the end of Italian Fascism, and, therefore, the opening of a new era in human history. The cause of Ethiopia is, thus, the cause of humanity and of human freedom. The future of civilization itself is at stake. It will be decided in the mountains of Abyssinia.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE BRITISH EMPIRE AND THE ITALIAN-ABYSSINIAN WAR

**T**HE great power most vitally and immediately concerned in any Italian conquest of Ethiopia is, undoubtedly, Great Britain. Her interest in Abyssinia is ■ two-fold one: economic, particularly with regard to the source of the Blue Nile, which rises in the Abyssinian mountains, and strategic, since the British Empire is vitally interested in the balance of power in the Indian Ocean. These interests are sufficiently great to justify ■ brief glance at their motivating causes.

(1) The economic interest of Britain in Abyssinia chiefly consists in the fact that the Blue Nile rises in Abyssinia; and upon the Nile depends the economic prosperity, the civilization, even the very existence, of the British protectorate of Egypt, and the British colony of the Sudan. The importance of these possessions to the British Empire is measured and enhanced by the fact that with Egypt goes

the Suez Canal, the key to India; and with the Sudan the vast [REDACTED] of British capital which have been, and are being, invested in the cotton plantations of the Sudan. (The importance of the Blue Nile to Britain can be judged from the fact that the Blue Nile and the Atbara—both of which rise in Abyssinia—bring down, when in flood, 500,000 cubic feet of water per second, [REDACTED] against 14,000 per second which reaches Egypt from the White Nile, which rises in the great lakes of Equatorial Africa.) One can, in fact, say that both Egypt and the Sudan are economic dependencies of Abyssinia.

Italian domination of Abyssinia would mean, of course, economic no less than political domination. A well-informed English writer, Sir John Harris, thus sums up the economic aims of Italy in Ethiopia:

(a) A railway line right across Abyssinia so [REDACTED] to link up the two Italian colonies of Eritrea and Italian Somaliland.

(b) The extension of Italian economic expansion [REDACTED] far as the borders of the adjacent territories of Sudan, Uganda, and Kenya; all British colonies.

(c) A 'reasonable' use of the waters of Lake Tsana, and the right to construct dams, i.e.



to block up, or to divert at will, the chief source of the Nile.

It is obvious that Britain cannot be indifferent to these possibilities; particularly ■ Mussolini is credited with the intention of diverting the waters of Lake Tsana towards the barren Italian colony of Eritrea, so as to divert their major sources of water supply from Egypt and the Sudan: ■ project which would cause ruin, and is already causing consternation in these countries, plus untold loss to British capital.

(Cf. Max Gruhl, *The Citadel of Ethiopia*: 'It is from this fortress-like land bordering on the eastern flank of the British Sudan that the death-blow might be given without great difficulty to the British world Empire.' (p. 16.)

(2) Strategic. Important as are these economic considerations, the strategic perspectives opened up by an Italian Ethiopia are, at least equally important for the British Empire. That Empire is, in final analysis, an Empire dependent more on the Indian Ocean than on any other. Once its hold on that ocean was destroyed, not merely India and the whole Far East, but also British North and East Africa (Kenya, Tanganyika, etc.) would be lost or fatally imperilled. Italian imperialism, in possession of Ethiopia, would occupy a menac-

ing position right on top of the vital artery of the British Empire, the Suez—Red Sea route. Particularly ■ there is little doubt that Ethiopia would but whet the Italian appetite for conquest, and that its conquest would be followed by attempts on the integrity of the Arabian countries, such ■ the Yemen, etc., whose possession would place Italy in a dominant position on both sides of the Straits of Bab el Mandeb (i.e. 'the gate of the south') and in immediate juxtaposition to Aden, the eastern key of the British Empire in India, and, perhaps the most important strategic centre of the entire British Empire. Such an Italian conquest would also threaten the Cape to Cairo route across Africa. After all, it must be evident that, in the Cæsarean dreams of Mussolini, the conquest of Ethiopia is ■ beginning of imperialist aggrandizement and not an end. Like his prototypes, Julius Cæsar and Napoleon, it is known that the vision of ■ great eastern empire perennially fascinates the Italian dictator. And its ultimate achievement implies the eventual dissolution of the British Empire.

This fact is not lost on the realists who direct the foreign policy of the British Empire from Whitehall; even if it is beyond the purview of the frenzied and apparently half-

witted Jingoës who blather in the die-hard Press about Italy's 'progressive rôle' in 'opening up' Abyssinia. The recent mission of Mr. Eden to Mussolini indicates that Whitehall is watching developments closely. The offer, by Eden, of part of British Somaliland to Abyssinia in return for economic concessions to Italy, was, from the standpoint of the British Empire, ■ life insurance against worse things, and ■ piece of enlightened statesmanship; far wiser than the howl of the Jingo press about 'throwing away the British Empire.' (In actual fact, if Italian imperialism has its way ultimately, the British Empire is liable to lose much more than Somaliland!) The 'patriotic' press is short-sighted. It is not Eden who is 'throwing away the British Empire,' but, rather, the Jingo scribes themselves by encouraging Mussolini. Such encouragement is, of course, to be expected from that band of sturdy Italian patriots, the 'British Union of Fascists.' Consequently, it is no surprise to find Sir O. Mosley, Mussolini's British disciple and would-be imitator, writing in *The Black-shirt*, that Italy has a 'civilizing mission' in Ethiopia. We know these Fascist 'civilizing missions': Hitler had one on 30th June, 1934! Responsible British publicists ought, however,

to know better, even from the most selfish British standpoint, than to encourage Mussolini to go ahead in Africa.

In relation to Mussolini, Britain can only do one of two things: bribe him or stop him. Since Eden failed with the first method, there remains only the second. Britain has only to close down the Suez Canal and the Straits of Gibraltar in order to close down Mussolini's African Empire. If she does this she risks starting a European war? Doubtless! But if she does not, she also risks it later, when she will be, perhaps, less prepared. That is the actual alternative at present before her.

## CHAPTER VII

### 'SHALL THE ETHIOPIAN CHANGE HIS . . . SHIRT?'

**T**HE question long ago asked by Solomon (the reputed ancestor of the present Negus) 'shall the Ethiopian change his skin?' is now, after a lapse of three thousand years, to receive a definitive answer. The Ethiopian may, after all, keep his skin; but the colour of his shirt must be incontinently brought into uniformity: he must don the Fascist black! He must assume the garb of 'civilization.' Mussolini, the liliputian Julius Cæsar of the modern era, has, at long last, answered the question which baffled the wisdom of Solomon to answer.

Dictators, like the empires they aspire to build, must keep their place in the sun if their regime is to survive and to prosper. Mussolini, for a decade the symbol of European reaction, the prototype of Fascist terror, now sees himself eclipsed in both these respects, by the yet more powerful and ruthlessly atavistic ultra-

montane Fascism of his former pupil, Hitler. The Duce no longer leads the Fascist retreat of civilization back to the Dark Ages: his imported Prussianism cannot compete with the original and genuine article.

Hence it is necessary to do something spectacular, something, if not dramatic, at least melodramatic, in order to restore his former glory and to rivet the eyes of Europe upon the successor of the Cæsars. Hence the Abyssinian enterprise, which, it is hoped and anticipated, will include glory, and revenge, equally with oil and cotton, in a single easy and triumphant enterprise. Moreover, Mussolini, already eclipsed by Hitler in Europe, may fear a similar eclipse in Africa; since, if Italy requires colonies on account of her expanding imperialist economy, it is certain that Germany, also, is not behindhand with ■ similar ambition. It is now or never, as far as Mussolini's African Empire is concerned. (Cf. Mussolini's recent statement to the Press that Europe has 'two or three years of relative tranquillity before her.)

The Roman Empire of classical times was, in reality (if we ignore the belated glamour of the historians), in the first instance, ■ huge slave-raiding commercial enterprise. The Roman 'mission' to civilize the Mediterranean

was merely ■ pretext for the creation of a colossal slave market. Similarly, the modern Fascist—'Roman'—Empire is also a huge slave hunting concern. For Fascism which has abolished trade unions, illegalized strikes, and which rules by beating-up, castor oil and concentration camps; for such a creed, whose *raison d'être* and sole cause of being is to enslave the proletariat, and to suppress all human freedom and autonomous culture; for such ■ creed to prate of extending human liberty and to talk of conquering Abyssinia in order to free the slaves is, assuredly, one of the most fantastic jokes which even that past mistress of irony, the Muse of History, has ever perpetrated.

But so it is. So naked is the barefaced highway robbery which Italian imperialism is about to commit against what she regards ■ a defenceless nation, that the only excuse she can proffer at the bar of world opinion for her projected outrage is that she is going to Abyssinia purely and simply for the sake of liberating the indigenous slaves. One has heard of Satan rebuking sin; but in this respect, old Nick must resign his laurels in favour of Mussolini!

The present is not the place wherein to discuss the demerits of chattel slavery, as

opposed to the merits—or otherwise—of imperialist exploitation, particularly ■ conditioned by Fascist countries—though it is probable that the ‘liberated’ slaves would find but little mitigation of their unhappy lot in an Italian Ethiopia—but it can, at least, be definitely asserted that, with the spread of modern civilization, chattel slavery, ■ it still exists to-day in Abyssinia and other mediæval backwaters, is, in any case, doomed, and does not, therefore, require Mussolini to kill off half the inhabitants of Ethiopia, in order to liberate the other half!

We learn that, even now, motor-cars, factories, and even picture palaces are commencing to make their appearance in Addis Ababa; and the eventual adoption of western civilization which these phenomena imply, will, sooner or later, make an end of chattel slavery; a primitive social institution which can never maintain itself in face of ■ scientific technique of production.

There is, accordingly, no need for Marshal Balbo and his bombing aeroplanes to go to Abyssinia in order to blow slavery—along with the slaves!—out of existence. The institution is, inevitably, doomed. The march of industrial civilization must eventually destroy it in



cotton-raising Abyssinia, as, and for the same peremptory economic reason, that it has already destroyed it in the cotton-raising states in the black belt of North America. And it may be that there, ■ well, the substitute will prove equally unpleasant. (It is, perhaps, permissible to remark, at the risk of annoying the 'anti-slavery society,' that ■ slave is often not notably more wretched than is a proletarian, particularly an unemployed one; at least, the former *has* a master to feed him.) At any rate, it is doubtful if the Fascist brand of slavery would prove more merciful or more acceptable than the local one. As Mr. Bertrand Russell has tersely observed, there would then be no need to *export* slaves!

[Note on slavery in Abyssinia: According to Lady Simon—cf. *Slavery*—there are some two million slaves in the Ethiopian Empire. It is the last remaining stronghold of chattel slavery in Africa, apart from the West African Negro Republic of Liberia—the ironically named 'Land of the Free,' where the descendants of freed negro slaves have enslaved the aboriginals! It is, however, fair to point out that the present Negus, Ras Tafari, an enlightened ruler who continues the progressive policy of his uncle, Menelik, has made the slave trade

illegal, and is endeavouring to suppress the institution altogether, but has, hitherto, been baffled by the still immense power enjoyed by the great feudal Rasses, the great slave owners. Abyssinia, on entering the League of Nations in 1923, undertook to abolish slavery.]

The official pretexts advanced by Mussolini and his publicity mongers are, consequently, even greater humbug than is customary at the inception of predatory imperialist adventures of the most wanton character. That the civilized world has duties towards its more backward and isolated members is perfectly true, and particularly so when that very backwardness is largely due to isolation enforced, ■ has been the case in Abyssinia, by the fear of European imperialist conquest, a fear only too well justified by the violent subjugation of so many negro states in the course of the last century. (Of the fellow African rulers of the Negus in 1835, how many survive to-day?)

But the duty of civilization towards its more undeveloped neighbours is one thing: it has nothing in common with the orgy of naked violence which Italian Fascism is preparing to loose upon Africa's last Empire at the time these lines are written. Such methods have nothing in common with civilization. They

reveal Fascism in all its naked brutality for what it really is, stripped of all civilized pretence and of its superficial veneer of civilization. They afford ■ complete, a hundred per cent justification for those thinkers who look beneath the glittering uniforms of the Fascist dictators, and, refusing to be deceived by mere appearance, see in Mussolini and Hitler merely glorified brigands, gangsters from the underworld, operating on a scale to which those heroes of the Chicago underworld, Al Capone and Jack Diamond, could never aspire, but, none the less, authentic coins from the same mint, blood brothers in crime; fundamentally identical in mentality.

Indeed, Araki in China, and Mussolini in Ethiopia, represent the arts of the gangster, of the underworld robber and assassin, raised to the international plane and elevated to the rank of historical phenomena bathed in ■ transparent sea of illusory glory. It is the rape of civilization which furnishes the starting point for Mussolini's African Empire.

If human culture, if humanity itself does not wish to be flung back for centuries, this highway robbery must be nipped in the bud; all hands must be called on deck to save, not merely Ethiopia, but, equally, civilization itself

from destruction. Once again, and finally, we summarize the urgent reasons which impel civilization to combine its forces, and to say to Mussolini peremptorily, in the only language that sabre-rattling freebooters understand: 'Thus far and no further.' The combined urgency of these reasons raises the Italian-Ethiopian dispute far above the level of a mere provincial dispute, and elevates it to the level of a turning-point in world history.

1. The violent lynching (for such, in effect, it is) of Ethiopia by Italy, means the end of the League of Nations, of the entire principle of international law, of the concept of reason and justice as applied to the relations between nations. It implies political atavism, the renewed reign of brute force, and the sole right of unrestrained might in international affairs; in short, the end of civilization as an effectual force to control the relations of nations.

2. It implies, equally and inevitably, the end of the epoch of colonial wars, and the approaching commencement of the subsequent, and consequent, era of inter-imperialist conflict, since might will then be right, and imperialist nations can only then expand at each other's expense; the aboriginal nations being then all

dispossessed. This ■ inevitably ■ new race for armaments, in which all security, all hope of social justice, and, eventually, as the result of the unparalleled destruction through modern war, all civilization itself must, and will, disappear. The Abyssinian expedition of Mussolini begins, and foreshadows, a whole era, that of an inter-imperialist cycle of wars for the violent redivision of the world, the logical and inevitable terminus *ad quem* for unrestrained imperialism.

3. The conquest of Ethiopia, Africa's last Empire, the one surviving link with African history, will inevitably arouse such a storm of racial hatred and indignation not merely throughout Africa and among the negro races, but, equally throughout the whole coloured world, as to create ■ new epoch of colour hatred and race war, such as the world has never, at any time, known. In this connection, the conquests of the nineteenth century constitute no parallel with those of the twentieth. European civilization is no longer world-wide, and the tide of colour is mounting fast. The wanton conquest of Abyssinia will enormously enhance it, besides going far to make impossible any peaceful settlement of the colour problem. Britain, in particular, who possesses the greatest

coloured empire in the world, has every cause to fear such an upheaval; ■■■ which will make race war as ultimately certain as imperialist war, thus preparing the way for the eventual downfall of the white races, if, ■ has occurred before in history, the centres of world power and civilization should eventually pass away from Europe. (Cf. the recent speech of the South African statesman, General Smuts.)

All these causes will spring inevitably from the violent inauguration of Mussolini's African Empire. Apart from the justice of the case, they are, or should be, amply sufficient to array the entire civilized world against this shameless irruption of the underworld into the field of international politics. Together they constitute the approaching African war as an historical turning-point. Faced with this new outrage on the part of triumphant chauvinism and reaction, the progressive forces of the world must agree to sink their differences and to act quickly. Otherwise, if the thin end of the imperialist wedge is in Africa, its thick mass may descend, before long, nearer home. There is emphatically no time to be lost.

Ultimately the world must make up its mind that the day of imperialism is past; the world can afford this barbaric survival no longer; it is

now too small. In final analysis, the choice lies between the consequences briefly sketched above, and a non-imperialist system, in which the ample resources of the world and its abundant supplies of raw materials shall be apportioned not, as now, by the naked arbitrament of force, but in accordance with the social and demographic needs of its inhabitants. The world is now, in reality, an indivisible unit; it cannot any longer be profitably sub-divided into such superannuated 'absolutes' as competing empires and egotistic states.

Such a conception is not, unfortunately, practicable at the moment. But, at least, nothing should be done to hinder it. The successful creation of Mussolini's African Empire by naked and brutal violence would imply the postponement of a united world and a new world order to a later century and to a civilization beyond the purview of our own. For this reason, and not merely because of his open relapse to political barbarism, the whole world should unite to restrain the aggressor; and for reasons of expediency, not less than of sentiment, should raise the unanimous slogan: 'Hands off Ethiopia.'

# MAP OF ABYSSINIA AND SURROUNDING COUNTRIES

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